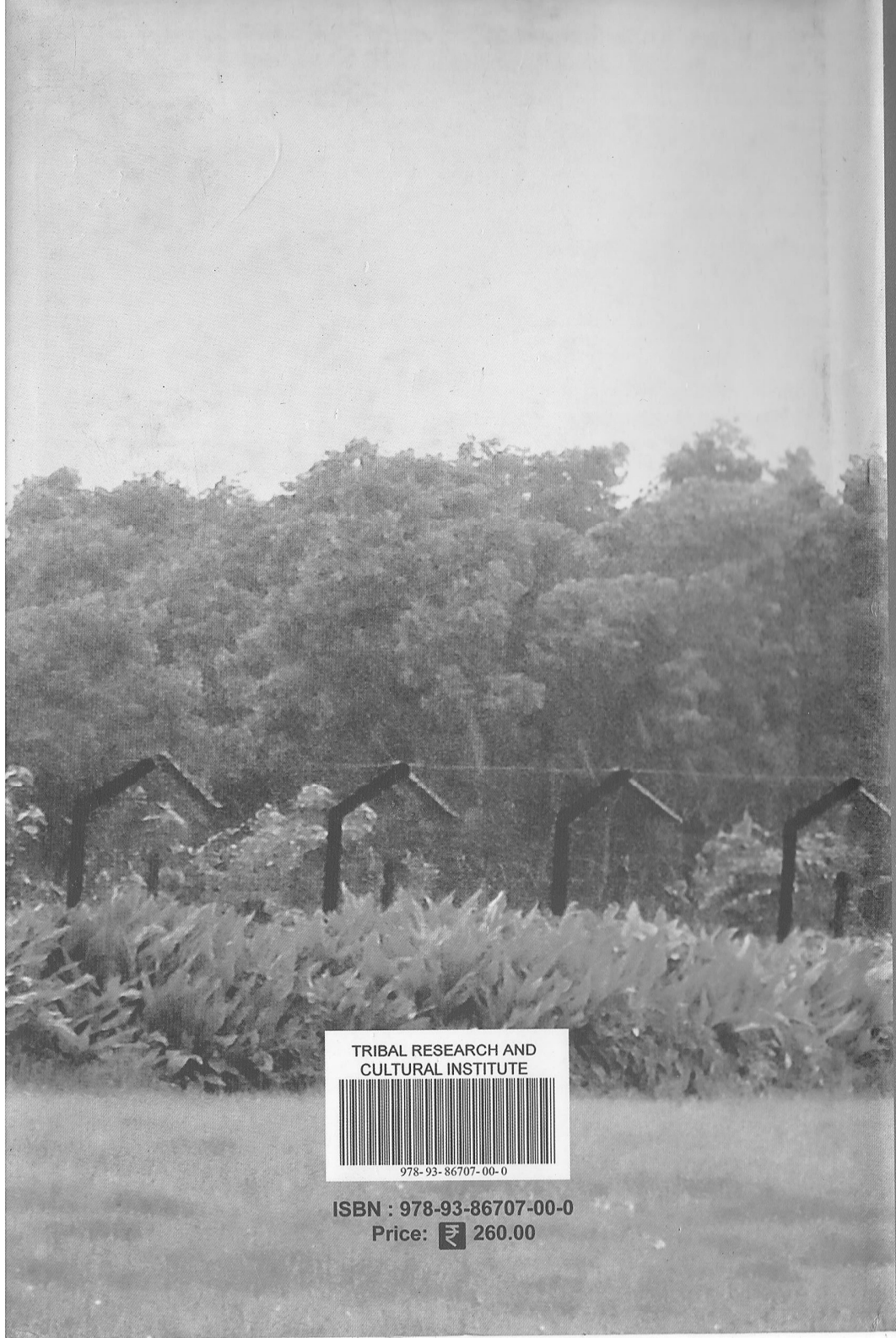

TRIBAL RESEARCH AND
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978-93-86707-00-0

ISBN : 978-93-86707-00-0
Price: ₹ 260.00

A CULTURAL HISTORY OF TRIPURA Dr. Jagadis Gan-Chaudhuri

A CULTURAL HISTOR OF TRIPUR

Dr. Jagadis Gan-Chaudh

Tribal Research and Cultural Institute,
Govt. of Tripura, Agartalal

About the Book

A Cultural History of Tripura is one of the standard works on the history & culture of Tripura. It is a faithful record based on reliable data and field survey. It has addressed a wide range of topics; but the narrative is not monotonous & fragmentary. It carries the weight, for its being the work of a senior, serious type of a scholar.

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About the

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A CULTURAL HISTORY OF TRIPURA

Dr. Jagadis Gan-Chaudhuri

A Cultural History of Tripura

written by :
Dr. Jagadis Gan-Chaudhuri

First edition : **January 2006**

2nd edition : **August, 2017**

Cover Design by : **Samar Sen**

Computerised composing by : **Samar Sen**

Printed by : New Quick print, Agartala.
9436129362

Published by : **Tribal Research & Cultural Institute, Govt. of Tripura.**

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ISBN : 978-93-86707-00-0

Price : Rs. 260/-

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A CULTURAL HISTORY OF TRIPURA

PREFACE
to the first edition

A Cultural History of Tripura is obviously a modest book about a local culture of India. It explores the expressions of culture found among the people of Tripura. It provides information about climate & human settlement, marriage & family, folkthought & folkdance, magic & sorcery, temple architecture & temple management. It traces the history of intercommunity relations, and presents current thoughts about insurgency.

Geographically, Tripura has been in touch with Assam and Bengal. The territory that is Tripura has moved back and forth, westwards and eastwards. Socially, Tripura came in contact with the Bengali Hindus, a contact that led to acculturation. Historically or rather imperially, Tripura came in contact with the Afghans & Mughals, and the Britishers. Considerable contact with so many peoples had left significant impact on her culture & history. Tripura has had a tumultuous history which continues to colour her culture even to this day. Here nature and politics are equally turbulent. Yet, in certain remote corners of Tripura, life follows the same old routine. Side by side with the old agricultural life, there is springing up an aura of modern academy & dispensary, electric plant & pylon, and roads & vehicles.

Looking over the changing life-patterns for centuries, it seems to be another kaleidoscope. As with generation, so with the Tripura kingdom, one king rose and then sank,

yield ing place to another, bequeathing the heritage and vanishing to return no more. Till 1947-1948, the monarchs of Tripura were the acknowledged leaders, the elegant pioneers to set the standards of culture, and eager patriarchs to solve the problems of all subjects.

During the post-monarchic turbulent time, which has been interrupting anthropological stud ies, research is active. And the alarming intrigues and communal incidents occurring in recent years seem to make the moment propitious for looking back to the culture of Tripura from an anthropological and historical perspective. Substantiated with references and adorned with photographs, non-committed to defend or detract any life-pattern, ***A CULTURAL HISTORY OF TRIPURA*** may, perhaps, be an illuminating account.

The Tripuri communities and the Bengalees are now locked in a hole forged out of a long period of co-operation & conflict. There is enough blame against each other; but this book is not on this negative theme. So the term alienation, anomie & d isorganisation have not been stretched to depict the present situation of normlessness. The precise theme of this book is an appeal for soul-searching vis-a-vis living space searching. With all stings fresh in the bosoms of both, let Tripura awake, burying the past in an amnesty and defend ing the ideals of democracy against all provocative strategy and competitive populism.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT
to the first edition

There are so many people to whom I owe a debt of gratitude for all their valuable help. It is almost impossible to name all of them.

My special thanks are due to Prof. Tusharbindu Chakrabarti of Agartala for requesting me to write on this subject from anthropological and historical angles.

For the photographs illustrating this book, I am indebted to the courtesy of four patrons : Sri Uttamkumar Chakrabarti, Srimati Nartaki Kalai my sister Lilabati Gan-Chaudhuri and my brother Dr. Narendra Gan-Chaudhuri.

My sincere gratitute is due to Maharajkumar Sahadev Bikram-Kisor and Sri Syamal Chaudhuri. Both of them are well-known scholars and authors of several books. They have furnished important information.

Prof. R. G. Majumdar, Dr. S. Bhattacarya, Prof. K. M. Das, Dr. B. Mandal, Dr. T. Shome, Dr. U. N. Adhikari, Sri Subhash Sen, Sri Syamal Das, Sri Subrata Ray, Sri Maniklal Ray and my elder brother Sri Rakhal Gan-Chaudhuri have been generous enough to inspire me.

Sri N. G. Baitule, Sri V. G. Pandharipande, Sri P. V. Holay, Sri M. K. Kawadkar, Sri G. P. G. Deshmukh, Sri Nitin & Sri Prasant, Sri Amit Mukhopadhyay, Swami Tryambakanandaji

Maharaj have given generous encouragement.

During my early research work (1969-1975) my Gurudev, Acarya Sudhirranjan Das (1916-1996) took pains to guide me even in field-survey in the Tripura hills, a rare opportunity indeed ! Like an ancient Indian *Guru*, Dr. Das used to read & reread, correct & recorrect my draft, and offer me dictations & dishes of food.

My obligation to authors has been acknowledged through references and bibliography of their books. References have been separately grouped by chapters and placed in appendix. For any fault, I have no one to blame but myself. If this survey can precisely project Tripura's image before the readers' inward eyes, my solitude will be amply rewarded.

Kalyan Ashram has always been kind enough to provide me food & shelter during my stay in Kolkata. Sri S.P. Thakur has smilingly offered judicious advice with his Brahmanical wisdom.

When Sri Basudeb Pal, a noble soul, with his efficiency & sense of economy, willingly took upon himself the technical tasks of computerised type-setting, scanning, printing, binding etc., a great succour was received in a bewildering situation.

Foreword to the second edition

Dr. Gan-Chaudhuri's *A cultural hisotry of Tripura* has won for itself a prestigious place as a standard work on the history & culture of the people of Tripura. Its continuous popularity implies his accuracy of analysis.

However, with the publication of new books every year, new materials are forthcoming. So, information must be kept up-to-date. We appreciate Dr. Gan-Chaudhuri for his precise scholarship.

10-8-17

(S. Debbrama)
Director
Tribal Research
& Cultural Institute,
Govt. of Tripura.

Preface
to the second edition

The events of the last few years (January, 2006 to April, 2017) have not made remarkable changes in the history of Tripura. So, in the second edition, this book has not been largely rewritten.

But changes are a continuous process; new materials are forthcoming; people's outlook is getting fluctuated with changing circumstances; and politics has paralysed the conscience of many people.

Atheism was physically risky during the medieval period; theism was risky during the last few years. Many politicians are competing more over the extension of vote-bank politics, than over the control of the evils generated by it.

In this edition, minor additions have been made. It contains least podding. But. B. Dhar's Promptness underlies.

I am happy that the TR&CI, Govt. of Tripura, has undertaken the task of publishing the second edition.

JGC

CHAPTER -I

Climate of Tripura

Climate of Tripura

Bangladesh, Bharat, Brahmadesh, Indo-China and Philippines have the same tropical monsoon climate which has a few sub-types because of variations in location, topography and direction of coastlines. Assam, Bangladesh, Brahmadesh and Tripura have a common sub-type of the tropical monsoon. The tropic of cancer passes over Mexico, Algeria, Saudi Arabia, Madhya Pradesh, Bangladesh, Tripura and Taiwan; but climate is not exactly identical in all these places. North-eastern corner of Bharat, Bangladesh and Brahmadesh (= Myanmar) may be taken together to constitute a small zone where climatic features are not different.

Troposphere

The lowest strata of the atmosphere is called troposphere. It is a zone of conviction marked by eddies and turbulence. It is composed of various gases (like nitrogen and oxygen), dust particles, smokes, moisture, sands, soots, viruses, germs pollens and other microscopic organisms. The dust particles are generally lifted and held in air by natural agencies including winds, waters, volcanos, etc. Tripura has no volcano. The summer winds from the south contain various germs of disease. The man-made agencies like pucca buildings, brick-fields, fire places, roads, workshops and vehicles are very rapidly increasing in number. The number of vehicles was 718 in 1955, and 12,615 in 1986-87. The government is shifting its emphasis from trade to production of various goods in Tripura itself. It is leading to industrialization, urbanization and improvement in transport and communication. All these have their impact on the troposphere which is getting polluted. However, the problem of environmental pollution till now (2004AD) is not as severe as that of Bombay (=Mumbai) and Calcutta (=Kolkata).

Insolation

Insolation means incoming solar radiation and exposure to the sunlight. Insolation is not uniform all over the world and at all times. It varies from place to place and season to season. Another factor which determines the degree of insolation is transparency of the troposphere. On the equator, solar rays spread vertically over a small area and

give a high degree of heat. Beyond the equator solar rays gradually spread obliquely over a bigger area and give a diminishing degree of heat. Tripura stands astride on the Tropic of Cancer; so the rays it receives are neither as vertical and hot as those of the equatorial zone, nor as oblique and cold as those of the polar zones. Tripura is in the temperate zone. Here duration of sunshine is longer during the summer (roughly from May to July) than during the winter (November to January). Troposphere over Tripura remains transparent during winter, and cloudy during the summer and the rainy seasons. Frequency of cloudy atmosphere obstructs radiation from earth and causes headache and some other diseases.

Temperature

Tripura has moderate temperature, but within the state temperature is not uniform everywhere. While Bombay and Calcutta have a high level of temperature because of proximity to sea and extensive urbanization, Tripura has a low level of temperature because of longer distance from sea, poor urbanization and certain local factors. The mighty Himalayas in the north prevent the entry of cold air masses from central Asia to Bharat; as a result, the vast region south of the Himalayas remains relatively less cold than it would have been otherwise. Tripura too is influenced by the Himalayas. From the south the Indian oceanic currents have their obvious influence on Tripura. Prevalence of numerous lakes, rivers, ponds, marshes, springs and water reservoirs here and there keeps the

level of temperature low and at the same time narrows down the chance of wide variation in diurnal temperature. Moreover, due to the occurrence of a number of hill ranges, numerous hillocks, valleys and gorges, air pressure is not uniform in all parts of the state and consequently temperature too varies in Tripura from locality to locality. However, this variation is not wide enough. Again, as most of the hill ranges are in north-south direction, their eastward facing slopes get sunlight during forenoon only, while the westward facing slopes are exposed to sunshine during afternoon only. The apparent movement of the sun between the Tropic of Cancer and the Tropic of Capricorn results in seasonal variation in temperature. As Tripura is located in the north hemisphere, the sun's migration towards south in October - January cools down local temperature, while its migration towards north during February - September makes a rise in temperature. Usually January witnesses lowest temperature (5^{0}C), while July experiences high temperature (35^{0}C). Summer temperatures very rarely climb to 40^{0}C.

Winds

The chief feature of the Tripura climate is the complete seasonal reversal of winds. There are two main winds in Tripura, namely, the summer wind and the winter wind. The summer wind flows for about eight months from February to September. The winter wind blows for about four months from October to January. The summer wind is wet, hot and violent. The winter wind is dry, cool and mild.

The summer wind picks up huge quantities of moisture and cloud from the Indian Ocean, and gives heavy rains, hailstorm and cyclone. The winter wind blowing off-shore from vast land mass of the north is usually dry. The apparent movement of the sun causes the reversal of the wind: migration of the sun towards the north hemisphere leads to the northerly summer wind, while migration of the sun towards the south hemisphere leads to the southerly winter wind.

Seasons

In Bharat the twelve months of a year are traditionally grouped into six seasons which constitute an annual cycle. The seasonal changes occur within a year and the entire cycle repeats itself every year. It begins with *Grishma* (=hot season) and ends in *Vashanta* (=spring season). The six seasons are:

1. *Grishma*=summer season=*Vaisak* & *Jaishtya* = mid-April to mid-June.
2. *Varsha* = rainy season=*Ashad* & *Sravan*=mid-June to mid-August.
3. *Sarat*=autumn season=*Bhadra* & *Aswin*=mid-August to mid-October.
4. *Hemant*=dewy season= *Kartik* & *Agrahayan*= mid-October to mid-December.
5. *Sit*= winter season=*Poush* & *Magh*= mid-December to mid-February.
6. *Vashanta*= spring season= *Falgoon* & *Chaitra*=mid-February to mid-April.

The above six pairs of months have been so grouped keeping in view not only weather changes, but also the question of uniformity and order. In actual practice, nature betrays all rigid division of changes, and seasons interlope. The principal seasons are: summer, the rainy season, winter and spring. Each season has some unique feature. Availability of mango, jackfruit, pineapple, blackberry etc. is the main feature of the summer season. The rainy season is marked by cyclone, gale, flood and hailstorm. During autumn, heavy clouds and rains gradually retreat, and winter makes its beginning. Sky begins to blaze and glow. Clear sky and ripe paddy field are the symptoms of the dewy season. A complete reversal of wind, dry and cold weather are the features of the winter season. The pleasant spring has a short lease of life mainly in February when trees sprout new leaves and various birds sing songs. The power and majesty of the melody of Indian Cuckoo (= *Bau katha kao*), a summer visitor (*Dol Purnima* to *Ratha Yatra*), fill the minds of the peoples with emotions, imagery and longings.

Humidity

It is a truism that vapour-carrying capacity of air depends on temperature; the more temperature the more carrying capacity and reversely the less temperature the less carrying capacity. Logically the equatorial zone has maximum humidity, the tropical zone has medium humidity and the polar zone has minimum humidity. As the very Tropic of Cancer passes over Tripura, Tripura's humidity is

less than that of the equatorial zone and higher than that of the polar zone.

Here the level of humidity rises upward during the wet months of June and July and goes downward during the dry months of December and January. The seasonal variation in humidity is related to the annual rotation of the earth. The apparent movement of the sun northward is followed by high humidity in Tripura; while the sun's southward movement is followed by reduction of humidity.

It is a common knowledge that water occurs in three forms: liquid, gas & solid. Its liquid form is water itself; gas form is vapour, while solid form is ice, hailstone, frost and snow. In Tripura numerous pieces of ice are artificially prepared almost everyday for food preservation; hailstones fall during the rainy season, but frost and snow are not naturally found here. It implies that Tripura belongs to that zone where evaporation exceeds precipitation. Water evaporated becomes gas or vapour, and water condensed becomes cloud, dew, fog, mist, hailstone, frost, ice and snow. Naturally both the processes take place here excepting the extreme form of condensation, that is, frost and snow formation.

Hydraulic cycle which means circulation of water over the entire globe through winds, obviously takes place here too. In addition to the general atmospheric movement of water, there are certain local factors which tend to raise the level of humidity in Tripura. Numerous rivers, rivulets, springs, lakes, ponds, reservoirs, hills, ever green forests and nearness of the Bay of Bengal enrich the water content

of local atmosphere. Hydraulic cycle is a continuous process, an outgoing phenomenon; but its rate is not uniform. It varies from season to season and year to year. Tripura experienced drought in 1972 and heavy rainfall in 1991.

Fog & Cloud

Both fog and cloud consist of microscopically small and visible aggregate of water droplets suspended in air. The main difference lies in their place of occurrence. Whereas fog occurs in very low altitude, just near the surface of the earth, cloud is seen in high altitude, far above the ground.

Fog is generally seen everywhere in Tripura, during the autumn, the dewy and the winter seasons. The density of fog in Tripura becomes maximum during December and January only. Over the bushy dingles in the eastern hilly part of the state such fog looks like huge smoke. In contrast to the dirty yellowish fog of industrial towns, fog in Tripura is whitish. As fog is formed very near the ground, it obstructs horizontal visibility. Reduction of visibility, however, does not pose a very serious problem here. Only for a few intermittent days during December and January people of Tripura face the problem of poor visibility. At that time, dense fog compels the airport authorities of the north-eastern part of Bharat to delay their morning flights. Fogs of Tripura are of radiation type. The ideal condition for its formation is set by winter nights, moist air, and slow wind.

There is no denying the fact that cloudiness is not

uniform all over the world and that cloudiness and rainfall are inextricably related to each other. Zones between 30^0 and 60^0 north and south latitudes witness maximum cloudiness. Tripura does not fall within that zone. But it is not far away from that zone too. Cherrapunji and Mausingram of Meghalaya where maximum rainfall is recorded, stand nearby to the north-east direction from Tripura. There are diurnal, seasonal and annual variations in the amount of cloudiness in Tripura. Here cloudiness usually starts in April, ascends its climax in May-June-July, descends in August- September and becomes almost nill in December-January. Clouds over the sky of Tripura greatly vary in colour, thickness, structure, transparency and geometrical arrangement. Here are seen both detached and compact clouds, thick and thin clouds, whitish and dark clouds, horizontally and vertically spread clouds, transparent and opaque clouds, light and heavy clouds, and clouds accompanied by lightning and thunder and clouds without lightning and thunder. Here the people often watch the heavy rain lashing the window-panes, the forceful gale wavering the trees, the terrible thunderstorm killing a man or a tree, and frightening thunder rattling the doors & windows.

Precipitation

Drizzle, hail and rain constitute the common forms of precipitation in Tripura. Drizzle is very light, fine, small and uniform drops of water which seem to float in the air. Here it is called *Pushpa Brishti* (=flower rain). Hailstorm called

here *Sila brishti*, is a destructive type of precipitation which falls in the form of pieces of ice produced in cumulo-nimbus clouds. It destroys standing crops in the field like brinjal, chillies, cucumber, pumpkin, tomato, mango etc. within a few minutes. Tripura receives heavy rainfall, about 225" a year. Three types of rainfall usually occur here, namely, convectional, cyclonic and frontal. Convectional precipitation is one in which intense heating of land surface precedes rainfall. Heat and rain occur alternately in April and May. Cyclonic precipitation is a great climatic hazard to the people of Tripura. It occurs in May, June and July, and damages animals, crops, houses and trees worth several lakhs of rupees every year. Horizontally spread clouds, gray & overcast sky and steady long-continued precipitation constitute front. Front is locally known as *Dagar*. All the *dagars* are not of equal duration and these are variously named after famous persons like Dasarath, Ram etc. Fronts give rise to floods[1] which damage animals, barrages, bridges, crops, dams, houses, men, roads, trees and trades and thus embarrass the administration every year. Tripura receives heavy rains which leach the soil[2]. For years together, vast swathes of the forest are being destroyed as people have moved in for gathering & shifting cultivation, for bamboo, timber and agriculture. Numerous rivulets swell the volume of the big rivers not only with water but also with clay, sand and gravel.

The climate of a country depends on several factors[3]. Tripura stands astride the Tropic of Cancer, as does the

Sahara, but the two regions have different climate. Italy and New Zealand maintain almost equal distance from the Equator, but the two states widely differ in climate.

Climate & culture act & react upon one another. The cultural history of ancient Greece and that of Tripura seem to resemble in one aspect. The Romans developed the art of government, while the Greeks perfected the fine arts. Here, the Tripuris contributed the dynastic government, while the Bengalees furnished the fine arts; and the two streams nourished each other to make the culture of Tripura vibrant, though the post-partition events tend to swerve the streams.

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CHAPTER - II

Geographic influence upon Tripura culture

Geographic influence upon Tripura culture

The relation between nature and man is one of reciprocal modifications. The interplay between the geographic factors and the human efforts is an eternal and universal process. The history of Tripura is no exception to this generalization. Tripura's physical environment has significantly influenced her people's agriculture, arts, crafts, colonization, folklore, food habits, housing patterns, political history, and religious beliefs and practices. The entire Bharat's geographical factors too have largely influenced Tripura.

Tripura was much bigger than it is now. It was like a federation of hills and plains. As a result of repeated Muslim attacks and invasions, the fertile plain portion was lost. The present state of Tripura is located between 22°56' and 24°32' North latitude, and 90°10' and 92°21' East longitude[1]. Its area (10,491.69 sq. km.) makes it nearly as large as Jamaica (10,991 km.). Plains and hills occur here almost alternately. Nature has worked here mightily. There are brooks, rivers, rivulets, lakes, a few hill ranges and numerous hillocks, gorges and valleys. Its rainfall is heavy, and climate is temperate. It has six seasons. The flora and fauna of Tripura are very rich in number and variety. It implies that the geographic environment of Tripura is much more favourable than that of the Polar regions. Here the natural environs are far from arid, rigorous and rugged. Here people get ample scope for agriculture, gathering, hunting and fishing. So there has been a steady increase in population; enough surplus of drinking, feasting, gossiping, singing and smoking. A little elaborate political institutions and lavish religious rites are also due to the bounties of nature. Nature has smiled on Tripura. So the welcome would be extended to all comers, an indiscriminate welcome that later proved to be fatal.

Colonization

The eastern part of Tripura with its green hills, tropical forests, and abundant flora and fauna provided an ideal site for the colonization of the collectors of wild vegetables, hunters and shifting cultivators. The western part where

the hill terrain gives place to the plains, narrow gorges to wide valleys, where the rugged topography gradually softens and where the rivers after their tumultuous journey of the hills lose their headiness and become quite, provided an ideal site for the colonization of the plough cultivators, businessmen, fishermen, traders and various artisans. The eastern part is thinly populated, while the western part is thickly populated. The Meghna river in the west naturally formed the boundary between Bengal and Tripura. The Meghna valley is one of the world's most fertile agricultural regions.

Attacks and invasions

Topographically, the western part of Tripura and the eastern fringe of Bengal (now Bangladesh) were convergent and identical. Where did Tripura end? Where did eastern Bengal begin? It was impossible to say. Besides geographical indeterminacy, ill defined borders gave the invaders further scope for intrusion. Tripura's abundant wealth of well-bred elephants was another important attraction for the Afghans, the Pathans and the Mughals. Within fifty years after the battle of Tarain (1191 & 1192)[2] Tripura was first attacked (1240 A.D.) by the Muslims[3]. For the next five hundred years (1240 to 1765) Tripura was attacked several times and ultimately lost the fertile plains of Megna valley in the west.

Tripura's inability to present a united defence against foreign attacks and invasions may be partly explained with the help of geographic factors. The ranges

and rivers cut the territory up into several small districts, each being ruled by a different chief. For centuries there were a number of small chieftainships. Building up of an empire was difficult. The Devvarman dynasty was, however, acknowledged as the apex ruler. The mass of the subjects were not cohered into one compact nationality owing to a labyrinth of mountains, gorges, rivers and valleys. Thinking reversely and geopolitically, the rugged topography, distant location from Delhi, wild animals, leaches, mosquitoes, dipterian flies and snakes etc. helped Tripura to maintain her precarious existence from the terrible clutches of the Afghans and the Mughals. Though the river Gomati was often used by the foreign hordes for the movement of the invading legions, and though Udaypur, like Rome, Paris, Moscow and Berlin was trampled by the foreign foes, Tripura was never completely massacred because of its wild topography. There are many steep ascents & descents on its hill tracks.

Economic occupations

Wild bamboo, fruits, roots, tubers, vegetables, and wood are vital to forager's livelihood. Wild dear, pig, hen and a few other species of animals and birds supplied for centuries an important item of food to the early settlers of Tripura. The hill slopes have been used for shifting cultivation (=swidden agriculture). The rivers of Tripura not only helped colonization, but also provided easy means of trade, commerce and communication. During the reign of Maharaja Govinda Manikya (1667-1676) one Dhanvanta

Sadagar brought two thousand maunds of salt through the Gomati nadi for the first time and received, in lieu, an elephant from the king[4]. From Bengal would be imported clothes, spices, hardware, medicines, utensils, ornaments, paper, books and groceries,etc. through the rivers and mountain passes. From Tripura would be exported bamboo, lalong grass, wood, elephant, sesame, cotton, jute, birds, animals and vegetables. Long before the development of roads and trains, bus and truck services, these rivers and mountain passes provided the direct routes of trade and transport between Tripura and Bengal. Long rafts of bamboo and logs were often floated along the rivers. For thousands of people bamboo, wood, cane and lalong grass provided the means of livelihood. Rivers, lakes, marshy lands provided occupation to so many fishermen and river men. The low hills of Tripura are the most suitable places for tea cultivation. The fact that the paddy cultivation is the main occupation of the people is due to the geographic condition. Horticulture and rubber plantation have found favourable physiographic condition here. The cycle of traditional economic activities is closely related to the cycle of seasonal changes. The fertile valleys and monsoon have made it ideal for the cultivation of arum, brinjal, cucumber, chilly, jute, lady's finger, paddy, potato, pumpkin, pulses, sugarcane etc[5]. The low hills are particularly suitable for homestead and cultivation of banana, bamboo, blackberry, betel-leaf, betel-nut, date, lalong grass, lemon, mango, pineapple, tamarind, teak, shal, rubber, etc; cultivation of

these plants is the livelihood of many local people. The geographic environment of Tripura has not compelled the immigrants from the east and the west to radically change their traditional vocations.

Social customs

Geographic factors have considerably influenced certain social customs of Tripura. Many elements of folklore have their roots in the natural phenomena and products. The people of Tripura have been deriving from the local flora and fauna materials for food, furniture, utensils, dress, ornaments and house construction. To illustrate a few points, bamboo, timber, thatching grass, cane and creepers are used as house-building materials. Nails of monkey, thorns of porcupine, ivory, seeds of *Ram-kala* (=*Musa rosea*), horns of deer are used as ornaments. Bamboo pipes and ripe gourds are sometimes used as containers. Many edible plants growing in a wild state are used as food. Bamboo sapling called *Bans Karool* is a favourite edible vegetable. Excessive consumption of dry fish here is explained as a safeguard against malaria caused by mosquitoes. Barks and leaves of certain wild plants are used for making wine, and colouring clothes. For proper ventilation and exposure to sunrays, east facing and south facing houses are preferred; keeping in view the northerly monsoonal wind, ponds are dug here in such a way that their lengths fall in north-south direction. The dug out tanks are of four types (*Indra, Chaubachha, Pukur, Dighi*). The Hindu marriage ceremonies are forbidden in *Bhadra*

(August - September) and *Poush* (December- January) because the people remain heavily occupied with sowing in *Bhadra* and with harvesting during *Poush*. *Agrahayana* is the most suitable time for marriage ceremony.

Religious rites

The religious rites and beliefs, sacred places and pilgrim centres too have been influenced by the geographical factors. Rivers, forests and high hills are held in high esteem by the Hindus. As elsewhere in Bharat, so in Tripura, rivers, forests and mountains are deified and worshipped by the local people. Professor Nirmal Kumar Basu has very aptly explained this aspect. It is worth quoting Professor Basu[6]:

" Her rivers sustaining vast masses of population and affording beautiful scenery and cool breeze have created such a sense of holiness about them in the minds of the people that they have been deified and worshipped....."

"The forests too have played a great part in the evolution of Indian culture. We have the literature of the Aranyakas, of which some of the *Upanishada* including the great *Brhadaranyaka Upanishad*, form a part. AT the third stage of life designated *Vanaprasthya*, every Hindu householder was expected to retire to the forest, usually along with his wife. Again, the forests have been the ideal places for the great educational institutions, the *Risikulas* and the *Gurukulas* ..."

"The mountains, again, have exercised a similar effect upon the Indian mind. The snow-clad Himalayas have been

described by Kalidasa as the king of mountains (*nagadhiraja*), ensouling divinity (*devatatma*)..... Numerous are the holy places in the region of the Himalayas....."

Here in Tripura the rivers are generally called *gang* which is an *apabhrangsa* of Ganga. All the rivers are supposed to be Ganga. But the Gomatinadi is the holiest of all rivers. Because of their holiness, most of the Hindu crematories are situated on river banks. The source of river or a confluence of rivers is believed to be very sacred place. The Dambaru in Tripura is such a centre of pilgrimage where thousands of people assemble on the day of *Poush Sankranti* in January[7]. The Unakothi hill in the north-eastern part of Tripura is another hilly place where various rock-cut images of the Hindu deities are found. The Tripuri, the Riang, the Jamatia and the Noatia communities have been worshipping the principal rivers from time immemorial.

The hills and forests of Tripura are supposed to be the abode of such deities as Baghai, Ban-kumari, Hawai, Hai Chukma, Buracha, etc. The smoke-like masses of fog over the hills during the winter season are believed to be the smoke belched from the fireplace of Larima, a mythological lady who serves the ultimate dish of food. The apparent movement of the sun towards north is observed with a ceremony called *Poush Sankranti* marked by merry- making, holy bath, devotional songs and sweetmeats and cakes (*pitha*) consumption. Because of the prevalence of snakes

the *Manasha Puja* is very popular here during the rainy season and the holy *Padma Puran* is recited. The beginning of the summer season in March-April is accompanied with certain diseases[8]. The presiding deities of these diseases are worshipped at that time. Most of the auspicious ceremonies, rites and rituals are held during autumn, winter and spring. Here the life-patterns follow the rhythms of the seasons. In the cultural history of Tripura, the seasons are of primary importance.

Administration

Influence of geographic factors on administration, laws and justice is rather indirect and subtle. In Tripura absence of extensive table lands, very wide valleys and big rivers, and presence of numerous hills, gorges, canyons and rivers, have retarded the progress of national political institutions. For centuries agriculture, human settlement, trade and commerce remained in their early primitive forms. There were several nuclei of administration in different hills. Each such nucleus grew among a cluster of hamlets. Each tribe had its own chief and customary laws. In Tripura the Riang, the Kuki, the Halam had their separate incipient government. In the early medieval period the Devvarman chief emerged as the territorial chief and gradually brought under his sway the eastern hills and the western plains. Soon, it faced the trouble of recurrent attacks from the Afghans, the Turks and the Mughals ruling over Bengal and the rest of Bharat.

The faint existence of traditional judgement by oaths and ordeals, tribal village councils and customary laws and the modern rules relating to the summer vacation and the Puja vacation and winter break, special provisions for food through rationshops in the hills and small administrative sub-divisions, community development blocks, police stations and the like clearly indicate the influence of the geographic factors upon administration. Here the towns are small & few.

The backwardness as well as crime here owes as much to the geography of Tripura as to its politics. Tripura, like Nepal, trades legally & illegally and heavily with its neighbour. There is a great deal of smuggling to & fro whenever there is a profit. While the borders are notorious for smuggling, cattle lifting, abduction and dacoity, the eastern hills are notorious for kidnapping, arson, mugging and lynching. So rapidly is neighbour's population increasing that its peoples are flooding into Tripura, Assam, West Bengal, etc. both legally and illegally. No body knows how many have crossed the long and porous borders off the record. It seems winning back India through demographic invasion. The abnormal population-increase may be ascribed to their imperial & militant foreign policy. The border security forces have a difficult & puzzling job here. The secular howl against their deportation rends the air. Unconscientiously absorbed in political game & populism, the secularists, perhaps, prefer vote to national safety.

Thunder, lightning, cyclone, torrential, downpours, and the other turbulence of nature like earthquake and flood have been echoed by the turbulence of politics of Tripura. The hills and canyons match with the insurgency and temporary truce and political rivalry. Conversations, gambling, rendezvous, social gathering, and even funeral attendance are now held along political party lines. In their attempt at maintaining internal solidarity, some terrorist organizations try to bind their members to secrecy with ritual oaths.

Language, literature & leisure

Tripura is a multi-ethnic and multi-lingual state. Tripura is the meeting place of two types agronomy: shifting cultivation from the eastern side and plough cultivation of Bengal in the west. Similarly, the state is the meeting place of two major ethnic and language groups: Mongoloid communities from the side of north-eastern Asia and the the Bengalees from Bengal. Even after centuries of living in the same country the prevalence of the Bengali settlement in the western fringe along the Tripura-Bangladesh borders, and the thick tribal settlement in the eastern side along Tripura- Mizoram and Tripura-CHT borders indicate the routes of migration and movement of the two major groups of people. National and international politics have left Tripura a cleft country with two distinct language groups. Peoples living in the hills and in the neighbouring countries are increasingly trumpeting the values of their language, literature and culture.

The local schools and colleges organise their annual sports during the winter season. Since 1983, a big book fair is being annually organized in a befitting manner during the winter season. Old people often spend much of their leisure time reading Scriptures & playing cards. *Chaturmashya*, *Harinam Sankirtan*, *Durga Puja*, etc. start right from the autumn. In the countryside the peasants and the landlords have a tradition of organizing *Kabigan* (= contest between two poets) during the winter season. The poets compose, compete and put questions in rhymes. It requires command over the Hindu Sastras, quick thinking, extempore phrase- making and rhyming. The rhyme has to be harmonious; it must match the music. The answer has to be witty, popular and precise. The poets come to the stage alternately. The contest continues for a few days. Each poet has its own team of dancers, singers, and drummers. While improvising rhymed songs, the poets usually follow a line of approach from the epics and *sastras* and select a debatable topic. The concluding ceremony becomes surcharged with emotions when both the poets simultaneously come to the stage, improvise rhymes and acknowledge defeat or victory and embrace each other in presence of hundreds of connoisseurs.

If the people's life-patterns follow the rhythms of seasons, their political behaviour follows the rhythms of politics. When a right-wing party comes to power, they say of themselves that they are like the long, sweet potato or red radish, red on the surface but white within; when a

left-wing party comes to power they say that they are like the ripe melon, green on the surface but red within,- not a bad self- assessment ! One notable instance of this very bankrupt mind was their response to the Ram Janmabhoomi issue. On 18.3.2002 they led a procession through the streets of Agartala to protest against the Ram Janmabhoomi movement and made vituperative speech only to please a section, by whom earlier they had been materially reduced to bankruptcy. Now, politics is making them mentally bankrupt. Such appeasement, such bankruptcy, such contradiction & such duplicity render a people unfit for sovereign democratic republic, but reduce them to be fit for a totalitarian regime. Their silence on certain crucial crimes warrants this. Such culture renders the mouldering colossus less capable of rising in its own defence.

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CHAPTER-III

Mongolian Settlement & suzerainty in ancient Tripura

Mongolian Settlement & suzerainty in ancient Tripura

The early history of Tripura is essentially the history of a few scattered regional chieftainships in a sylvan environment. It will be quite logical to imagine successive waves of immigrants coming over to this tract by land. Most of them were preliterate people, organized not as one nation, but in tribal chieftainships, living in hilly villages, not in towns.

Four major Tibeto-Burman tribes, all belonging to the widespread Mongoloid race, emigrated from their ancestral home and extended their settlement to this tract bordering eastern part of Bengal. The possible cause of their migration and movement lay in their traditional life patterns.

Each tribal chieftainship was small and autonomous. Hilly terrain, uneven topography, primitive economy, illiteracy, ill-health, primitive means of transport and inter-tribal feuds account for their small size and autonomy.

In all likelihood, there were five little principalities in ancient Tripura. Out of those five principalities, four were in the eastern high lands and hills, one was in the Meghna valley in the west. What follows is a brief account of those five principalities :-

1. The Meghna valley consists of a long strip of low and fertile land. Noakhali, Comilla, Brahmanbaria and southern Srihatta stand on the eastern valley of the mighty Meghna. It was populated by the Bengali Hindus. They were plough cultivators, businessmen and artisans. It is very difficult to ascertain the period of Bengali migration in the Meghna valley. The copper-plate grant of land by Maharaj Vainya Gupta in 188 Gupta era (=507 A.D.) seems to be the earliest historical evidence of the Bengali settlement in the Meghna valley[1]. It may be regarded as the earliest copper-plate record hitherto known to have been discovered in East Bengal[2].
2. The northern part of Tripura was populated by the Tipra people. They were shifting cultivators. They were of Tibeto-Burman stock. It is difficult to ascertain the period of their migration and settlement here. However, a copper-plate grant of lands to five Maithili Brahmanas in 51 Tripura era (=642 A.D.) seems to be the earliest historical evidence[3].

3. The southern part of Tripura was populated by the Mogh people They had emigrated from Burma and extended their settlement to Arakan, Chittagong, Noakhali and southern Tripura[4]. It is difficult to ascertain the period of their settlement in this region.
4. The north-eastern corner of Tripura was inhabited by the Kuki-Mizo-Lushai groups of people. They were shifting cultivators. They belonged to the widespread Mongoloid race. It is very difficult to ascertain the period of their first settlement here.
5. The south-eastern corner of Tripura was inhabited by the Riang people. They were shifting cultivators. They belonged to the widespread Mongoloid race. It is difficult to ascertain the period of their settlement here.

Sufficient material is not available to present an accurate picture of the political history of ancient Tripura. Nevertheless, the above five principalities constituted the very core of the regional history of ancient Tripura.

The story of separate occupation of different localities by different groups is interesting historically. Each group has left deep marks on the history of this tract. Since the distant past, ethnic groups had been very prominent in Tripura politics. However, the marks of some groups have waned, while those of some others have waxed. The vestige of the Bangalee, the Mogh, the Kuki-Mizo-Lushai and the Riang has waned, that of the Tipra dynasty has waxed.

It is pertinent to ask why the other four groups, namely - the Bengalee, the Mogh, the Kuki-Mizo-Lushai, and the Riang never rose to supremacy? It is equally appropriate to ask how the Tipra dynasty became the overlord of the entire tract?

Despite certain advantages over others, the Bengali dynasties perished. Despite certain similarities with the Kuki-Mizo-Lushai group, with the Mogh community and with the Riang community, the Tipra dynasty desperately made a progress. What accelerated the progress of the Tipra dynasty? How did they surpassed their cognates?

The Meghna valley became a field of intensive political activity. In that flat fertile valley several dynasties ruled one after another, namely - the Gupta, Bharadvaja Gotriya Brahmana[5], the Rata[6], the Khadga[7], the Deva[8], the Chandra[9], the Varman[10], Pattikera princes[11] and the Dev[12]. In spite of the fact that the region was fertile and flat, communication was easy, productive system was efficient, division of labour was complex, tools and technology were efficient, the region could not rise to prominence because of internal discord and the Muslim invasions which found the Meghna valley an easy prey.

The Mogh and the Kuki-Mizo-Lushai group and the Riang community could not rise to prominence because of geo-political situation, medieval moorings of life and lack of acculturation. Their chiefs thought more of their own tribe than of the whole people. They hardly thought beyond a limited circle.

But the Tipra dynasty consciously undertook an

ambitious programme of acculturation. They took full advantage of the geo-political situation. They settled in the Assam-Bengal and Bengal-Manipur trade routes. Those trades made their settlement rich and populous. The Tipra dynasty became progressive and connoisseur of the Indian arts and crafts, culture and civilization, language and literature. An impulse of renaissance was thus felt by them. It led them to undertake gigantic programmes of state-formation. The history of the dynasty flowed on in a fairly peaceful course.

The Tipra dynasty was not long left in peace. Now followed a long struggle between the Tipra dynasty and the Muslim invaders. So long as Bengal was under the Pala dynasty and the Sena dynasty, the whole of north-eastern India was safe. The moment Bengal was captured by the invading armies of Ikhtyar Uddin Muhammed Bakhtyar Khilji, the danger became imminent. Lakshman Sen of Bengal was dethroned in C. 1204 A.D. The Tipra principality was attacked in 650 TE (=1240A.D.). The battle took place at Sylhet between Chhengthoom-pha of the Tipra dynasty and Hiravant Khan. Chhengthoom-pha was diffident and hesitant[13]. But his queen remonstrated with womanly vigour, roused her subjects and soldiers, led them to the battle field and repulsed the enemy[14].

It is very significant to point out that the Tipra dynasty could not resist the subsequent surreptitious infiltration of the Muslims into their principality in Sylhet. Piece by piece the immigrant Muslims silently encroached and subdued a sizeable portion of the Tipra principality. So the Muslim incursion and infiltration dislodged the Tipra

dynasty from the north to the south, from a corner to the centre, from the Barak valley to the Gomati valley. A village called Rangamati was the seat of the new capital. Situated centrally in the new kingdom, Rangamati was able to command its Tipra, Kuki-Lushai-Mizo, Riang, Mogh and Bengali areas effectively.

The course of those migration and movement of the Tipra dynasty was not a bed of roses. There were at least two occasions of confrontation. One was with the Kuki-Mizo-Lushai group and another was with the Mogh tribal community. In both the cases, the Tipra dynasty won. The Tipra chief was not ruthless to the obstructer. A section of the Kuki-Mizo-Lushai group submitted to the Tipra dynasty and came to be known as Halam. The rest of the Kuki people with a turbulent set of mind retired to the hills. In recognition of their submission and solidarity, the Halam chief would be given due honour in the state dinner (*Hasham Bhojan*)[15]. The defeated Mogh chief was known as Lika Raja[16]. The defeat of the Kuki-Mizo-Lushai groups and the Mogh remarkably registered a claim of suzerainty of the Tipra dynasty. The two obstacles to consolidation of power were removed. The Riangs and the Bengalees never stood on the way to consolidation. Rather a ready ally was found in the Bengalees who were frightened by the onslaught of the Muslims.

The period of Tipra ascendancy at the centre of Tripura during the late thirteenth century and early fourteenth century constitutes the most brilliant chapter in the history of Tripura. No other ruling dynasty in Tripura played such a dominant role in this region for a considerable period of time till 1949A.D. No less than three of its rulers, namely - Dharma

Manikya. Dhanya Manikya and Vijay Manikya carried their victorious arms into the very heart of the Meghna valley and by inflicting defeats upon the the Afghan, the Pathan, the Mughal invaders changed the course of history of this region. They brought under their rule all the local hill ranges and the Meghna valley. These famous kings excelled in the arts of peace as well. They built tanks and temples, granted lands and divided the kingdom afresh. They had avenged violent invasions, but allowed and overlooked surreptitious infiltration of the Muslim population which proved very fatal subsequently.

With the installation of the Tipra dynasty at the Gomati valley, regional history comes to an end, and national history begins. Tribal chieftainship ends. Territorial kingship begins. The kings were Tipra, and the subjects were Kuki-Lushai-Mizo-Halam, Riang, Mogh, Bengalee and some others. The feeling of antagonism slowly dwindled. The Tipra kings steadily took a national character. Their state was not exclusively a mono-national state. It was a plural society. It was a multi-national state with a composite population. To this dynasty we owe the protection of our person and property, peace and prosperity, our security and solidarity. The sword of Dhanya Manikya (c.1490 - 1515) was wisely wielded to consolidate the boundaries of Tripura. The swords of Lookpilal, Lal Hoolien, Mischoey lal were wildly wielded to adversely affect the boundaries of Tripura. The history of feudal & regular army of Princely Tripura is interesting. A slow, evolutionary process did not work here. Abnormal situations forced the kings to recruit army, regiment by regiment (Tripuri, Jamatia, Riang, Bengali); as per the expediency, the regiments (Bengali, Riang, Jamatia) were reduced & discharged.

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CHAPTER - IV

Tripuri marriage, family & kinship

Tripuri marriage, family & kinship

The Tripuri culture has evolved certain norms of marriage, family and kinship. Of all forms of mating, marriage is the most approved one. Family is a thoroughly established primary association among them. The voluminous kinship terminology indicates the intimacy among the kith and kin. A complex of natural instincts and necessary needs has subtly forced the Tripuri community also to recognize the importance of certain durable behaviour patterns; here, in the shape of marriage, family and kinship. Biological foundation, rather than economic foundation, is logically believed to be the solid foundation of culture and civilization. To the Tripuris also, marriage is a sacrament, and family is the hub. It is subject to institutional controls.

Marriage

The customs and norms of Tripuri marriage, family and kinship are now well-known. Earlier works on the subject include T.H. Lewin's *The Hill Tracts of Chittagong and the dwellers therein*; H.H. Risley's *Tribes and Castes of Bengal*, Vol.II; E.H. Gait's *Census of India*; 1901, Vol.VI; K.P. Sen's *Sri Rajmala*; Asit Chaudhuri's *Census Report of 1901*, Thakur Somendrachandra DevBarman's *Census Report*, 1931; Priyangbada Devi & Ajitbandu Dev Barman's *Tipra*; S.B.K. Dev Varman's *The Tribes of Tripura* : A Dissertation; Mukul Hazra & D.P. Dev Barman's *Tripuri*.

Regulations of Selection : Marriage is called *Kailai*[1]. In sharp contrast to pre-marital laxity[2], rigorous regulation stands after marriage. The Tripuri culture has social restrictions on partner choice. This culture has customary guidelines about whom a person ought to marry. The well-known limitations of exogamy and endogamy are practised by the Tripuri community also. The norm of exogamy requires marriage outside the family and lineage. Prohibition of mating and marriage between parent and child, between brother and sister, between uncle and niece, between grand-parent and grand-child is strictly followed. Cross-cousins are children of brother and sister, and as such fall within the norm of exogamy. Thus, ethical & social considerations too are involved in the selection.

The norm of endogamy requires that both marriage partners be members of the Tripuri community. This norm is largely followed but there are exceptions. The royal family and the well-to-do families have set up examples of

marriage outside the community. Endogamous marriage is preferred, but not always followed.

Levirate and sororate also sometime govern the Tripuri marriage. The levirate is the custom of providing a young widow with another husband, often one of the deceased husband's brother. It is the obligation of deceased husband's kin to provide the widow a husband if she is still marriageable and childless. The deceased husband's younger brothers and male cousins, if unmarried, may be asked to take the responsibility, but cannot be compelled. The sororate is the custom of providing a young widower with another wife, often an unmarried sister as successor to his deceased wife. Here also there is no compulsion on either side.

Forms of Marriage

The Tripuri community practise both monogamy and polygamy. Monogamy is the widely practised form of marriage; polygamy has two subdivisions : polyandry and polygyny. The Tripuri kings, aristocrats and well-to-do chiefs were found to have more than one wife. But no Tripuri woman was found to have more than one husband at a time. In other words, monogamy is commonly, while polygyny is rarely followed. Polygamy is much rare than monogamy. Polyandry and group-marriage are not found in the Tripuri community.

Methods of acquiring mates

Various methods of acquiring a mate are in vogue amongst the Tripuris. It may be added that other

neighbouring tribes also have almost similar methods. Again, all the methods are not always followed by the Tripuris. The following methods are noteworthy :

1. Marriage by service (= *Chamari kao*)
2. Marriage by the payment of bride-price (= *Hamjook tooboa*)
3. Marriage in which the bride's father not only foregoes bride-price, but also makes the gift of his daughter along with valuables (= *Chamari tooboa/ Nok kareotana / Kanya dan*)
4. Love marriage (= *Tei Khailaio*)
5. Marriage by abduction (= *Hamjook teisao*)
6. Marriage by elopement (= *Tei Kharo*)
7. Marriage by mild capture (= *Boorai selaioi laga*)
8. Re-marriage of widow/widower/divorcee (=*Sindoor foolna/mai charoa/nok firoga)*

Practical negotiations

The most frequent and preferred way of acquiring a mate, especially in the case of first marriage, is through negotiation and the payment of a bride wealth. Among the Tripuri, as among the Riang, the Jamatia, the Noatia, the Uchai, the Lushai-Kuki-Halam, the Chakma and the Mogh, marriage is neither simply a matter of personal choice, nor an exclusively personal affair; it is equally the concern of the family and of the village council. It is a public commitment to one another for life-long mutual support.

Negotiations before marriage between the two families usually emphasize certain pragmatic issues : such as the period of service to be rendered by the boy, the amount of cash to be paid by the boy's family, the girl's efficiency in domestic work and the boy's skill in basketry & hunting, in field work and other vocations. Marriage negotiation centres round the question of how the boy's family should compensate the girl's family for the loss of her useful services. This compensation, in the case of the Tripuri, the Riang, the Jamatia and of other cognate communities, consists of bride service and bride wealth. The rural Tripuri culture illustrates this situation[2]. The searcity-value of woman is implicit.

But the urban Tripuri culture has moved along with the time and registers certain changes. The Tripuri community has a long tradition of monarchy and aristocracy, and a considerable size of urban population. A good portion of he urban Tripuri population is not directly engaged in food production. Most of them are in administrative and bureaucratic jobs. In this case, marriage negotiation centres round dowry. The dowry is a payment, in cash and kind, that flows from the girl's family to the boy's family. The dowry is not the opposite of the bride service and bride wealth, because the sense of compensation is absent. Rather, it is an assistance of supporting the bride in her new home, a prize for accepting the responsibility of the bride, a capital in the hands of the bride to start her new hearth and home, and an asset in case of any misfortune.

Mediators

Boys usually marry at about the age of twenty or a little earlier or later. Girls are given in marriage at an early age. A girl is considered to have reached the marriageable age only when she can carry water with two earthen pitchers together. Marriageable boys and girls have their friends and relatives who act as informal informants and mediators. But there are a few aged and responsible mediators having the qualities of eloquence and mild temperament. Such popular persons are called *Raibai*[3]. He is a mine of information of marriageable boys and girls. The parents often consult the *raibai* (*ghatak*) and get the benefit of his stock of knowledge. Upon being requested by the boy's parents, the *raibai* very tactfully goes to the house of the girl and casually starts smoking, drinking, gossiping and collecting information about the future plan of the parents about her marriage. If the information elicited is found favourable, the *raibai* gives information about the boy and leaves a positive impression about the boy. The girl's parents, if impressed, request the *raibai* to act on their behalf. Thus he moves like a shuttle.

Auspicious prologue

On getting a favourable understanding, the mediator fixes a tentative date for bi-partite discussion and later on, confirms it. In the evening of the date already confirmed, the mediator, the boy's parents and guardians, go to the girl's house with a number of bottles of country liquor. The girl's parents and guardians entertain them with tobacco

and betel leaves. After the initial welcome, the boy's father places four bottles of rice-beer in front of two lighted earthen oil lamps, expresses the object of their visit and humbly requests them to drink the liquor.

Generally, the girl's parents and village elders accept the offer, since the groundwork has already been completed by the go-between. In presence of the two sets of guardians the terms and conditions are settled. It ends with blessings (= *dang dua* = *Dhanya-durba*) and feast. These are usually done in *Kartik-Agrahayan* (October-November) before the winter season starts. This ceremony is called *Kak-sunga* (=*mangal-acharan*)[4].

Bride service

The *kak-sunga* ceremony marks the shifting of status of the boy and the girl. Now they are supposed to have moved from one social setting to another. They are henceforth to be treated as groom and bride.

The groom is usually sent to the bride's house on an auspicious day in October-November before the operation of the *joom* cultivation starts. The groom proceeds leisurely in a procession accompanied by his friends and relatives; they carry his clothes, utensils etc. in a basket. On the way the friends sing, joke and play on musical instruments. The youthful procession of drummers, flute-players, musicians and dancers with shrill tunes and clamour, makes a joyous sensation all around[5]. During the period of service, he has to attend to all sorts of duties, mostly connected with

shifting cultivation, basketry, house building and collecting firewood and vegetables.

This period of probation has an economic as well as psychological aspect. It is a sort of personality test; the bride and the parents get an opportunity to observe the groom's taste and temperament from very close quarters[6]. It is an ancient example of participation-observation method.

If the groom stands the test, marriage is solemnized after the expiry of the service period. If the bride and her parents dislike him, and decide to get rid of him, she puts a black charcoal inside the ready dish of cooked food and serves him. It is a clever device to alert him, who then silently leaves the bride's house.

Sometimes, payment of cash, say, Rs.100/- or Rs.120/- or Rs.140/- is made by the rich parents of a groom as a substitute for service. A completely different set of terms and conditions is occasionally placed before a groom's parents. If the bride's parents are not blessed with a son, then they judiciously look forward for a dependable groom and forego all claims of bride price, but set the condition of groom's settling down with them so that the new couple may look after them in old age.

A very small but significant aspect of bride wealth is the payment of cloth and a cash of a few rupees to the mother. This is the symbolic price of milk, the bride drank while she had been a baby.

The marriage ritual

Once the initial agreement has been achieved, and the bride-price as well as bride service has been paid, the actual ritual of marriage occurs on an auspicious date. There is a considerable time gap between the agreement & marriage. The ritual involves sacred rights seeking divine blessings, and divination foretelling whether the marriage will be a happy one, and symbolism dramatizing the union, and merrymaking, eating and drinking.

Some rites are simultaneously performed in the house of the groom as well as in the house of the bride. The villagers and relatives are to be duly invited a few days before the auspicious date of marriage. At least two persons with a tray of flowers, and a tray of betel leaves and betel nut approach each family so that they feel honoured to take active part in the rituals. A few young married ladies are honourably invited and engaged beforehand to initiate all rites. Similarly, a trustworthy man is duly engaged to look after the store; he is called *Bhandari*; The *Bhandari* takes care of the feast. The village chief supervises the entire ceremony. These praiseworthy arrangements provide great relief to the parents. The villagers gladly cooperate to build marriage pavilion, to collect bamboo, leaf, firewood, water & flower, to cook food and to distribute the dishes. The village priest plays an important role.

On the previous day, either three or five or seven married ladies whose husbands are alive, perform a rite

called *Kuai-Cano* or *Pana-khili*. Those ladies sit together, arrange certain things such as : earthen lamp, incense, decorated earthen pitcher full of water, twig, fruit and then cut a fresh turmeric into two halves and drop; if one half falls prostrate and another half falls on the back, the marriage will be a happy one[7]. It is very auspicious if the very first attempt is successful; otherwise, they go on repeating till the desired signal is achieved. This is followed by chewing of betel leaf, the taste of which is also indicative of the future of the couple.

On the previous day, while the ladies remain engaged in *Kuai-cano*, a few adult males prepare marriage pavilion outside the house. The pavilion (*haya* or *bedi*) is a marvellous piece of decorative art on green bamboos. The wedding booth, made of erected bamboos, apparently looks like a pagoda. The bamboos are so carefully scrapped at intervals as to make fly-whisk-like pendent earrings. The pavilion is covered with several layers of canopy. The number of layers varies from seven to twenty-one according to the social position of the groom. Only the king is entitled to twenty-one canopies[8].

The wedding morning begins with the worship of the *Lampra-owathap* and *Tui-sangrang-ma* deities in both the houses[9]. It is officiated by the *Achai*. The bride and the groom are blessed by the *Achais* in their respective villages. Then the bride and the groom are made to bathe very early in the morning. After the bath and the worship, the groom is made to mount either on an elephant or a palanquin for

the joyous parade around the village. It is called *Gaja-Firaga*[10]. Formerly, marriage would be solemnized in the morning. Immediately after the *Gaja-firaga*, the groom's party proceeds towards the bride's house. The bride's party duly welcomes the groom's party. The bride and the groom are specially dressed with nuptial garments and ornaments. A man carries the bride on his back to the *bedi*; the bride is asked to break a branch of a tree twig (*Kamini-sakha*) planted before the *bedi*. Now, the lord of ceremony, the groom is enthusiastically made to enter the *bedi*. Neither the groom, nor the bride is left alone. The bride is made to circumbulate the groom seven times; at the end of each round she bows before the groom and sprinkles flowers. This is followed by the emotional ceremony of exchange of garlands. Then comes the most significant ceremony of *Sampradan*. After that, as a mark of union, the two ends of the garment of each are temporarily tied together[11]. It indicates further shift of status from the groom and bride to husband and wife. The husband and wife are required to bow the *lampra-owathap* deity. The *Achai* blesses them by sprinkling a few drops of holy water on their heads.

Blessings and bowing

The newly wed couple are led to a room and made to sit on a new mat. An earthen lamp is lit with oil and wick; cotton, *durba*, flower, paddy and a stone are placed on a plate. Every item has significance: lamp for divine witness, cotton for honesty, *durba* for modesty, flower for love, paddy for prosperity and stone for familial solidarity. The

elders bless them by placing paddy and *durba* on their heads; the couple in turn, bow. This is called *dang-dua* or *dhanya-durba* ritual[12]. It is followed by a grand dinner.

The next morning opens with pathos. A depression and melancholy, a pain overtake the parents and the villagers. As the husband's party along with the wife proceeds towards their own village, the wife's parents burst into tears, while others vacantly stare at as far as their eyes can reach.

Right from the morning the husband's village continues to remain jubilant, to arrange a feast and to welcome the couple. On their cheerful arrival, the entire village assemble and accord hearty welcome. The wife is led to make a symbolic cleansing of the house. The meaningful ceremony of *dang-dua* is held here also; it is followed by a grand dinner. The couple are led to distribute dishes and wash the hands of elders. The concluding ceremony is very short and simple : the ornamental head-dress, coronate, is to be buried by the couple alone at dawn on the third day[13].

Family

The Tripuri are one of many communities who trace descent in the male line. A family is called *Nak* which is usually associated with the religiously sanctioned union (*Kailai*) of the spouses. As elsewhere all over the world, here too marriage and family are complementary concepts. The most common form of traditional Tripuri household is the joint or extended family household. The Tripuri people are not a small and homogenous community. There is no

denying the fact that in their case also, theory and practice, ideal and reality do not always agree.

Tripuri culture is an instance of the situation in which the emphasis is on each spouse's distinctly separate competence. According to the traditional division of labour, a Tripuri boy has to accompany his father in hunting, foraging, fishing, basketry, hut building and felling trees for shifting cultivation; while a Tripuri girl picks up cooking, weaving, sowing, weeding, nursing, fetching water and collecting firewood and vegetables. Maharaja Bir Chandra Manikya of the Tripuri dynasty had nothing to worry if his children were not accustomed to the traditional skills, or to the scrubbing of his palace floors. But among the rural Tripuri farmers the learning of those skills is essential.

Here, by patrilocal residence and petrilineal descent, the females are lost to another household through marriage which brings them into a different and distant household. The newly wed wife does not cook on a separate fireplace; she does not cultivate a separate plot. She cooks for all, cultivates common plot and harvest for all and fetches water for all.

The elders of the Murngin community of northern Australia have a trend to monopolize the girls. So the young boys harbour jealousy against the elders[14]. The Tripuri chiefs and elders, by contrast, expect their youths to marry and settle down the serious business of establishing a family. Indeed, the Tripuri parents and elders consider it their duty to arrange the marriage of the young people. The youths also deem it their duty to nurse their old and seek parents.

Within the Tripuri family such rolls as those of parent, child, brother, sister, father-in-law, mother-in-law, son-in-law, brother-in-law are clearly known to all concerned. The relation between father-in-law and daughter-in-law, between mother-in-law and son-in-law, between husband's elder brother and the woman, between maternal uncle and nephew's wife is one of avoidance. The relation between a woman and her husband's younger brother, between the male and his wife's younger sister, between grand-parents and grand-children is one of joking[15]. In a situation of avoidance relationships, the person concerned never utters crude, harsh and obscene words; conversation among them is minimum, indirect and polished.

It may be a travesty of truth to leave an impression that the members of Tripuri family always behave ideally, cordially, justly and honestly. We can have an idea of aberration from the history of Tripura and from folk songs and proverbs. Ratna Manikya usurped power; Maharaja Govinda Manikya's step-brother Nakshatraray inflicted a wound by usurping power with foreign help. Govinda Manikya's grand-sons were engaged in fratricide. The proverb : 'indirectly teach the daughter-in-law a lesson, by directly beating the daughter' implies tension, stress and strain between mother-in-law and daughter-in-law. There is no guarantee that every marriage continues peacefully till the death of spouses. Divorce is permissible if the grounds appear to be reasonable.

Kinship

Like all peoples the world over, the Tripuris also recognize kinship bilaterally and possess certain terms which are applied to persons related either by descent or by marriage. In weal and woe they interact, interdine, intermix and influence each other. It is impolite to address certain persons by their names. The kinship terms are indicative of the type of relations and degree of distance.

The Tripuri kinship uses various terms to denote the generation, to indicate whether a person is male or female and whether a person has son or daughter. The common principles used in the classification of kinship in many cultures, are as follows :

1. Age
2. Affinity
3. Consanguinity
4. Condition of relative referred to
5. Collaterality
6. Generation
7. Lineality
8. Nature of connecting relative.
9. Reciprocity
10. Sex

The above principles need a little elaboration for the sake of comprehension. Indeed, Beals, Hoijer and Beals have brought the principles into high relief[16].

Age

In English usage, a distinction is made on the basis of age, between 'big brother' and 'little brother'. In Bengali usage, a similar distinction is denoted by 'dada' and 'bhai'.

Affinity

The persons related by marriage are affinal relatives.

Consanguinity

The persons related by blood and descent are consanguine relatives.

Condition

If a relative is married, father or mother, widow or widower, alive or dead, it may make a difference in the terms to be applied. In English usage 'bachelor', 'maiden', 'widow', 'widower' are used. In Bengali usage 'kumar', 'kumari', 'bidhaba', 'bipatnik' are used. In Tripuri usage, Ratna's father is addrssed as Ratna-pha.

Collaterality

The principle of collaterality indicates those relatives who are outside the vertical line of a descent. The cross-cousins stand in collateral relationship.

Generation

The principle of generation is applied in counting the lines on a genealogical table; 'grand father', 'father' and 'son' indicate three successive generations. It is supposed to be unwise and unsocial to put all generations together for all purposes. Accordingly, behaviour-patterns vary.

Lineality

The principle of lineality indicates those persons who fall on the vertical line of descent. Ego's father, ego and ego's son constitute a vertical line. It is an intimate group.

Nature of connecting relative : This principle includes the consideration of age, sex and distance. In Bengali usage wife's elder brother is referred to as 'Bhasur', while the younger brother as 'Devar'. In English usage, cross-cousins are cousins whose parents are siblings of opposite sex. Parallel-cousins are siblings of the same sex.

Reciprocity

The principle of reciprocity indicates an intimate relation in which the two relatives occasionally address each other using the same term. In Bengali usage the grand-father and the grand-son often use the term 'dadu' to address each other.

Sex

The principle of sex is used to distinguish the male relatives from the female relatives; 'father', 'brother', 'son' stand in sharp distinction from 'mother', 'sister' and 'daughter'.

The Tripuris use most often the above principles in their kinship. But all these principles are not of equal importance. Age, generation, lineality and sex constitute the essential principles. It is important to add that the Tripuri kinship terminology lumps certain relatives under a single term. For example, for father's elder brother, mother's elder

brother, father's elder sister's husband, mother's elder sister's husband, only one term 'aiung' is used. The term 'yangjuk' is used for father's elder sister, mother's elder sister, father's elder brother's wife and mother's elder brother's wife. Similarly, the term 'atai' is used for four female relatives, viz. father's younger sister, mother's younger sister, father's younger brother's wife and mother's younger brother's wife. The Tripuris are a practical people to form what corresponds to circles of kinship groups. While the lineal group constitutes the inner circle, the practice of making formal friendship with ritual oaths indicates the existence of an outer circle at the tertiary level. The following table provides a list of Tripuri kinship terms along with their English and Bengali terms :

English	Bengali	Tipra
Father's father's father	*Prapitamaba*	*ba-katar*
F F M, M M M	*Prapitamahi, Pramatamahi*	*ma-katar*
FM, MM	*Pitamahi, matamahi, thakurma, didima*	*a-chui*
F F, M F	*Pitamaha, Matamaha, dada*	*a-chu or dada, buda*
Father	*pita, bap, baba*	*a-pha or bap, baba*
Mother	*mata, ma*	*a-ma or mata, ma*
FEB	*jetha*	*aung or jetha*
M E B	*mama*	*aiung or mama*
FESH	*pisha*	*aiung or pisha*
MESH	*mesho*	*aiung or mesho*
MEBW	*mami*	*yangjuk or mami*
F E B W	*jethi*	*yangjuk or jethi*
F E S	*pishi*	*yangjuk or pi, pishi*

MES	*mashi*	*yangjuk or mashi*
FYS	*pishi*	*atoi or pi, pishi*
MYS	*mashi*	*atoi or mashi*
F Y B W	*kaki*	*atoi or kaki*
F Y B	*kaka*	*kaka*
M Y B	*mama*	*mama*
F Y S H	*pisha*	*pisha*
M Y S H	*mesho*	*mesho*
Father-in-law	*svasur*	*kara, svasur*
Mother-in-law	*svasuri*	*karajuk, svasuri*
Step-mother	*sat ma, hatai*	*hatai*
Elder brother	*dada*	*ta, da*
Younger brother	*bhai*	*phaiung*
Elder sister	*didi*	*bai, didi*
Younger sister	*bon*	*hanakjuk*
E B W	*baudi*	*bachai, baudi*
Y B W	*bauma*	*oaijuk-rok*
E S H	*jamaibabu*	*kumai*
Y S H	*bon-jamai*	*buai-rok*
Wife	*stri, bau*	*hik*
W E B	*sambandhi*	
W E B W	*sambandhir stri*	*bachai*
W Y B	*shyalak, sala*	*ang-prang, sala*
W Y B W	*shyalaker stri*	*ang-prang juk*
W E S	*jestya shyalika*	*oaijuk-rak*
W E S H	*bhayra*	*kumai*
W Y S	*shyalika, sali*	*ang-prang juk*
W Y S H	*bhayra*	*ang-prang jukni-busai,*
bhayra		
Husband	*swami*	*slai*
H E B	*bhasur*	*oai rak*
H E B W	*ja*	*bachai*
H Y B	*devar*	*ang-prang rak. kui,*
monai		

HYBW	*ja bihik, kuini bihik*	*ang-prang-rakni*
HES	*nanad, nanadini, nanas*	*buai-juk rak*
HESH	*nandai*	*buaijuk-rak-ni busai, kumai*
HYS	*nanad, nanadini, thakurjhi*	*ang-prang juk, kui, monai*
HYSH	*nandai busai, kui-ni-busai*	*ang-prang-jukni*
Son	*putra, poot, chhele*	*shajla, poot, chhele*
Brother's son	*bhratusputra, bhatija*	*bai, bhatija*
Sister's son	*bhagina*	*bhagina, babaa*
Daughter	*kanya, meye*	*shajuk, kanya, meye*
Brother's daughter	*bhatiji*	*baini-juk, bhatiji*
Sister's daughter	*bhagini*	*baini juk, bhagini*
Child's father in law	*behei*	*chamai, behai*
Child's mother-in-law	*behain*	*chamaijuk, behain*
Son's wife	*bauma*	*hamjuksa*
Daughter's husband	*jamai*	*chamai-sa, jamai*
		babu
Grand child	*nati, natin*	*shuk*
Great grand child	*panti*	*bara*
G G grand child		*ranchi*
G G G child's child		*chichu*

Social Structure

The Tripuris have a few synonyms, such as Tipra, Twipra, Puran Tripuri, Dev Barman and Tripuri. Quite evidently, they are historically the dominant community and numerically the largest ethnic group in Tripura. An investigation of their social structure may provide useful information. The official chronicle and the early census

reports furnish the relevant information. The Tripuri community consists of about a dozen of groups. In his ethnographic report Gait has noted the existence of more than a dozen of groups[17]. A.C. Chaudhuri[18], K.P. Sen[19], S.C. Dev Barma[20], S.B.K. Dev Barman[21], and M. Hazra & D.P. Dev Barman[22], have approved Gait's list with a little modification. The information which has passed through the hands of these scholars deserves to be repeated. They have it to say that the Tripuri have several subtribes, the names of which are as follows :

Bachal :

They were carriers of the royal insignia.

Siuk :

They were hunters and suppliers of meat to the royal family.

Kuatia :

They were bearers of betel leaves and nuts.

Daityasingh :

They were soldiers, bodyguards, police.

Hujuria :

They were attendants & errand boys.

Siltia :

They were transporters of ritual articles to temples.

Apaia :

They were suppliers of fish.

Chatratuia :

They were holders of umbrella (= Rajachhatra)

Deorai and Galim :

They were priests and assistants in the temples.

Subenaran :

Their duty was to cut and chop fish and meat in state dinners, feasts & festivals.

Chena :

It was their duty to wash the dishes used in the state dinners.

Julai :

They were required to render manual services. They were further divided into small groups.

Obviously, the names and the duties assigned to them indicate a feudal character, which throws into the back ground the old identity. In the Toolashi hills of Belonia, in the southern part of Tripura, the Khakloo community have been living. They belong to the Puran Tripuri community. Their social structure may provide additional information[23]. However, the Kartas & the Thakurs were the most accomplished urban aristocracy.

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CHAPTER-V

Tripuri Folk-thought

Tripuri Folk-thought

Traditional aphorism, beliefs, proverbs, riddles, stories and songs current among the tribes of Tripura constitute an important area of research in folk-thought. Judged by their proverbs, these tribes seem to possess a sound understanding of human nature. Their proverbs indicate careful observation and a wise generalization about human character. What follows is an attempt at understanding the social thought of the largest tribal community of Tripura, Tipperah (alias Tripuri, Tipra, Deb Barma).

Historical background

Tripura stands between Assam and Bengal. Its population is heterogeneous. However, the Bengalees from the west and the tribes from the east have extended their settlements. It is the meeting place of two types of agronomy : plough cultivation from the west practised by the Bangalees, and shifting cultivation from the east practised by the tribes. The western valley had become bookland, wile the eastern hills remained folkland for a long period. The socio-political order was dominated by a ruling dynasty, which belonged to the Tipperah community. The kingdom was repeatedly attacked and invaded by the Afghans and the Mughals. Battles ceased during the period of British administration in India. The dynasty survived several vicissitudes of history and at last in 1949 handed over the kingdom to the goverment of India.

The major tribes of Tripura are

Tipperah, Riang, Kuki, Lushai, Hallam, Jamatia, Noatia, Mogh and Chakma[1]. Most of them were farmers in the hills by slash-and-burn method. Life was largely rural. There was little commerce. Literacy was very low. The middle class was very small in number. Each community had its chief and village council[2]. The prosperous males were polygynous, while the ordinary people were monogamous. Family was the main unit of social life.

Thoughts

We may now turn to the Tipperah social thought. Lack of written records makes the span of their social thought a

short one. But it reveals a keen sense of observation and a desire for world affirmation. Selected illustrations of proverbs have been noted blow.

The proverb

'spittle drops back in the face of him who throws it upwards' or 'a spear hurts its maker', or 'sin does not spare one who commits it', or 'pride makes a scholar blind and immoral conduct makes a saint blind' - recognize that evil deeds return upon the doer.

The proverb, 'if somebody possesses sufficient money he can obtain even tiger's eye' recognizes the power of money.

That parents are often blind to the weaknesses of their children has been expressed in the proverbs : 'son-in-law is worthless, daughter-in-law is worthless,' and 'if son-in-law is good, then and then only my daughter will be good' and 'if daughter-in-law is good then and then only my son will be good'.

The importance of industriousness is reiterated in a few proverbs such as 'he who loves family too much sinks and dies; he who loves work prospers', or 'he who takes food on banana leaf during his youth will take food on a plate of metal during old age' or 'an idle person finds no food, a shrewd person finds no shelter'.

The hollowness of foppishness has been censured in the proverb : 'even a rat does not enter into his house to discharge faeces, but he exhibits foppishness'.

The advantage of keeping company with good persons has been expressed thus : 'burning of poor quality wood produces excess of ashes, talking to notorious persons produces altercation' or 'prefer a house next to that of seven witches, but avoid a house next to that of a deceitful person.'

The influences of social environment on human life has been candidly stated thus : 'Keeping company with a fickle lady makes a man fickle, keeping company with a fickle man makes a woman fickle; keeping company with a thief makes a man thief'.

The following proverb makes an assessment about the three prominent neighbouring communities : 'The rice of the Kuki-Lushai people is fine, the curry of the Bengalees is tasty, the hands of the Riang people are open'.

The need for independent thinking has been urged in this aphorism : 'Upon being advised by others, if you scatter rice in a jungle, it will be impossible to recollect all the grains'.

The force of rumour has been explained with an analogy from wild life : 'it is possible to shut the mouth of elephant and of tiger, but it is impossible to shut the mouth of man'.

A crude advice for business transaction has been uttered thus : 'do not give loan to a sweet-tongued man'; 'after taking loan weep a little, laugh a little if you are denied loan'.

Suavity has been appreciated in this proverb : 'after swallowing sweetmeats, we no longer feel sweetness, but the sweetness of amiable behaviour remains in memory'.

The selfish tendency to get rid of one who has served the purpose has been condemned. It is one kind of injustice. It finds expression thus : 'young boys! please come and help in cutting down deep jungle; young boys! please go away, we are now relishing the pork of a big swine.'

The danger of going to law-courts and to file suits against neighbours has been forewarned. Often it ruins the accuser and the accused. So the advice : 'it is better to tread on faeces than to tread on a court of law or on a police-station.'

A mother's love and affection have been found to be a genuine and enduring trait. So the proverb runs : 'there is

nothing as round as the moon, there is nothing as powerful as the sun. There is nothing as good as a mother's love.'

In domestic life peace and prosperity have been highly valued. A hankering after beauty and luxury was despised. So the aged people admonish : 'do not marry a beautiful lady, do not go to market to purchase vegetables and do not eat big fish.'

In domestic and civic life due attention was paid to organic solidarity and social control, as well as obedience to elders and fraternity. Precocity has been disliked. Too much control is disastrous. The following proverbs are very significant:

'if strangled, milk will come out'

'elder brothers are as honourable as parents'

'if brother is good, loan is available'.

'if sister is good, curry is available.'

'friction arises even among earthen vessels.'

'indirectly teach the daughter-in-law a lesson, by directly beating the daughter'

'while being overflowed, even a dry bamboo takes a side'

'where posts are properly planted for a hut, it is difficult to push axe to slash the hut'.

'dry bamboo depends on green bamboo, green bamboo depends on dry bamboo'.

Excessive beatings make the back mad, excessive abuse makes the ear mad'.

In domestic life the hazards of being the parents of many worthless children were realized, and at the same time the reputation of being the parents of only one popular and prominent son is preferred. The relevant proverb is : 'Sometimes ten gourd plants cannot cover the whole trellis. 'Sometimes only one gourd plant can cover the entire trellis'.

Their social thought indicates a strong tendency towards world-affirmation. Theirs is not a philosophy of world-negation. The saying goes like this :'while you work, work with dogged tenacity; while you eat, eat like a king'.

Folk thought is usually strongly influenced by a deep belief in supernatural force; divine reward and punishment are supposed to be behind every action. Fate, soul, rebirth, deity and ghosts and spirits occur prominently in the folk thought of the Tipperah people. Here is a proverb about fate :

'Thundering of clouds is audible, but thundering of forehead is not audible.'

'The *Mahabharata* is readable, but this small forehead is not readable.'

The Tipperah community boasts of ruling the kingdom for several centuries. It boasts of having as many as 185 kings. Obviously, they were not a tax-ridden community. So, there is little reflection on tax burden. On the whole, the Tipperah folk-thought is, like that of many other preliterate people, simple, practical, direct, and rich with rhetoric decorations and imagery drawn from the immediate sylvan neighbourhood.

And in the field of folk-tales, some high peaks of their literature - the story of white elephant[3], the story of *chhatim* tree (*Alstonia scholaris*), the story of the very long-handed boy, Saloong Jabriha, for instance - are very familiar and popular. These and other folk-tales have various motifs, such as successful orphan, unusual heroism, jealousy of somebody, blood-thirsty witch, physical transformation, magical power of a thing, animals & birds & plants in service of man, punishment and reward and the like[4].

CHAPTER-VI

Folk-dances in Tripura

Folk-dances in Tripura

In Tripura a triad consisting of dance, music and song has been continuing to play an important part in the worship of gods, and in the means of amusement and entertainment. Both the hills people and the plains people resort to these arts. Significant changes have, however, taken place in their life patterns. What follows is an attempt at studying certain folk-dances of Tripura.

Tripuri community

The community has a few synonyms, namely, Puran Tripuri, and Devvarma, Dev Barman. This is the largest community. According to the 1981 Census report, there were 3, 31, 191 persons in this community. The Tripuri community has the distinction of ruling Tripura for several centuries. Traditionally the dynasty has ancestral relation with the Lunar dynasty of the *Mahabharata*. The people of this community are distributed all over Tripura; however, they have heavy concentration in the western and the northern parts of Tripura. Majority of the people live in the hills and rural villages; but their number of urban dwellers is steadily increasing in Agartala.

Tripura gets heavy rainfall. Hills and valleys occur alternately. Tripura is rich in flora and fauna. Naturally, Tripura provides ample scope for foraging, shifting cultivation, animal husbandry, horticulture, basketry, fishery and weaving. The occupation of the Tripuri people is a mixed economy.

The Tripuri have a tendency of exclusively forming a hamlet of their own. A hamlet is called either *badi*, or *kami*, or *pada*. In selecting a site, they prefer flat top of a hill of medium height. According to their tradition, a village having 126 families is a big and ideal one. Each family lives in a separate house. The traditional house is rectangular in ground-plan. The floor consists of a platform raised about 7 feet from the ground level. The platform is made of flattened bamboos. The Tripuri community consists of the following clans, namely - Bachal, Siuk, Kuatia, Daityasingh,

Hujuria, Chiltia, Apaia, Chatratuia, Deorai & Galim, Subenaran, Chena, Julai. Most of the above noted clans are feudal in character, and by no means totemic in origin. Each clan had to send its representatives to the royal family to discharge certain specific duties.

The Tripuri people usually take three meals a day. Rice is their staple food. They prefer sun-dried rice to boiled rice. Their favourite drink is fermented beer brewed from rice.

The traditional dress of the Tripuri is simple and suitable to their environment. Loin cloth, napkin, shirt, wrapper, turban, breast-cloth, *dhoti*, *sari* etc. constitute their dress. The Tripuri women are expert weavers. Earrings, bracelets, necklace, armlets, bangles are their usual ornaments.

They acquire mates by the following means:

1. Marriage by service (*chamari kao*)
2. Marriage by the payment of bride-price (*hamjook tooboa*)
3. Marriage by the donation of daughter (*chamari tooba/nok kareo tana/ kanya dan*)
4. Love marriage (*tei khalaio*)
5. Marriage by abduction (*hamjook teisao*)
6. Marriage by elopement (*tei Kharo*)
7. Marriage by mild capture (*boorai selaioi laga*)
8. Re-marriage of widow/widower/divorcee (*sindoor foolna/mai charoa/nok firoga*)

The above means of acquiring mates conform to certain

methods described in the *Manusmriti*. The bride-wealth consists of manual service by the boy to the girl's house before marriage. But the recent trend is obviously towards dowry which indicates a shifting of importance from the bride to the bridegroom.

Their cosmological belief is interesting. It is believed that the Sun and the Moon are couples and the stars are their children. Deities are also supposed to have family-life. The earth stands on a big tortoise. The tortoise sometimes sends a black bee to collect human excreta for its food. But the notorious black bee sometimes tells a lie and reports that human life is non-existent on earth. To verify this report, the tortoise shakes its body. This causes earthquake. Formerly the sky was much below and it was like eatable mushroom. People would cut, cook and eat it. But one imprudent person pushed it upward by the stroke of a baton.

The Tripuri are Hindus. They worship a number of gods and goddesses. Mahadev is the supreme god. They cremate the dead bodies and go on pilgrimage to Kashi, Mathura, Vrindaban and Haridwar. Only recently young boys and girls are being converted to Christianity.

The Garia puja is a religious festival which provides occasion for dancing, singing, and drum-beating. It starts on the day of *Chaitra Sankranti* (usually 13th April) and continues about a week and ends on the 7th day of *Vaisak*. Two deities, namely, Kalia & Garia, are worshipped for a peaceful and prosperous new-year.

The Lakshmi puja is another occasion for worshipping, dancing, singing and playing on musical instruments. The Laxmi puja is variously known as kojagiri or hojagiri. This is held in the month of October, after the famous Durga puja.

After the attainment of independence, Republic day celebration annually held on the 26th January provides a very magnificent occasion for the presentation of dance. Dance-troupes are invited by the government and provided opportunities for the display of their skill in front of a distinguished gathering of spectators.

The Garia *nrtta* is a group dance. It is a calendric and ritualistic dance. It is connected with the Garia puja. The principal deities worshipped here are Kalia and Garia. They are brothers. It is a festival. It commences on the last day of the month of *Chaitra* (March-April) and continues for a week and comes to an end on the seventh day of *Vaisaka* (April-May). During this period, in the evening of every day almost every big village where the Garia puja is celebrated, dancers, musicians, priests, singers, boys and girls move in a procession, break their journey frequently, and enter into every house and display their dances. They do not dance for a whole night. They spend about three hours daily.

The Garia *nrtta* incorporates a local mythology. It is believed that Garia was an *avatar* or an angel. He was born in Tripura long, long ago. He had a noble mission and vision. But his parents could not realise it and arranged his marriage. Each occasion of marriage was followed by divorce. Being compelled by his parents and elders, he had

to marry seven times, but left the young ladies untouched. So that the ladies left him. Garia maintained his chastity and tried to improve the moral tone of the people through his precepts. This is the gist of the legend. So the motive behind the Garia *nrtta* is to enthuse and entice Garia to marry, love and cohabit with wife and live a mundane life.

This dance is an orgy of the young boys and girls. It is performed to the accompaniment of drums, flutes, songs, shouting and applause.

The Hojagiri *nrtta* is a group dance. It is a calendric and ritualistic dance. It is connected with the worship of the twin goddesses, namely, Mailoma and Kholoma. Mailoma is the guardian goddess of rice, while Kholoma presides over cotton. It is usually known as Lakshmi puja. Its synonym is Kojagiri. Hojagiri is the *apabhransa* of Kojagiri.This festival is preceded by the famous Durga puja held in the month of *Aswin* (Sept-Oct).This is a folk-dance, and more particularly an agricultural dance. The traditional agriculture of these people is on hill slopes by the slash-and -burn method. It commences during the winter season. It is called *joom* or *jhum* or *hook*. The different movements of the dancers are mimetic of various phases of the shifting cultivation, such as site selection, dream revealation, cutting jungles, setting fire, clearing debris, planting seeds, weeding, scaring wild animals & birds & insects, gathering the crops, winnowing, storing and husking. This is also performed to the accompaniment of music and song.

The Joom *nrtta* is a group dance. It is a secular dance. The Republic day celebrations since 1950 AD provide the occasion of folk-dances. The state governments and the Central government arrange beautiful stages, invite the troupes of folk-dances and provide all facilities for the performance of folk-dances. Accordingly, arrangements are made by the government of Tripura in Agartala for various folk-dances. The movements of the Joom *nrtta* are obviously mimetic of the agricultural activities. So the Joom *nrtta* does not significantly differ from the Hojagiri *nrtta*. The inner content is the same in both. The audience, the spectators, the stage and the other arrangements are the marks of difference. Moreover, here the performance is very brilliant, dazzling, improved, and formal. It is something like old wine in a new bottle.

The Joom *nrtta* is performed in two basic formations, namely, line and circle. Dancers enter into the stage from two corners. Male dancers come from one direction, and female dancers simultaneously come from another direction. They do not enter haphazardly; they do not pour out profusely. They enter one after another and start moving their hands and feet right from the entrance. Males and females stand in two parallel lines. These two lines run parallel, cross over, intersect, intersperse and interweave. Then again the dancers break the lines, stand in the circle, males and females stand alternately, gyrate, splay, and bent inwardly. The movements are bold and quick. The main emphasis is on foot work.

Riang community

The Riang community occupy the second position so far as the numerical strength is concerned[2]. According to the 1981 Census, there were 83,476 persons in the Riang community of Tripura. Besides, there are Riang in Mizoram, in Assam and in the Chittagong Hill Tract. In Tripura, their settlements are usually in the eastern hills.

The economy of the Tripuri, the Riang, the Noatia, the Jamatia, the Halam and the Uchai are almost similar. It is a mixed economy comprising hunting, fishing, foraging, shifting cultivation, basketry, weaving, horticulture and plough cultivation.

They build their village on the flat top of hills. A village is surrounded by hills and jungles. The villages are apart from one another. Each family lives in a separate house. The traditional Riang living-house is rectangular in ground-plan. The size is not uniform. Bamboo, thatching grass and timber are the main materials. The floor is usually raised above the ground.

The Riang community consists of the following clans:

Apeta	:	Members of this clan are expert in magic and spells
Chang Preng	:	They are expert in playing musical instruments
Charkhi	:	They are expert in weaving
Molsoi	:	They are descendants of

		Mogh father and Riang mother
Meska	:	An ancestor of this clan was killed by a tiger
Musa	:	An ancestor of this clan was protected by a leopard
Noukham	:	An ancestor of this clan burnt his kitchen room
Oairem	:	A clan having many insane people
Rai Kacak	:	It is a clan named after a soldier.
Tam-Yak-chha	:	Its ancestor's leg was seriously injured
Tooimoi-iafa	:	Its ancestor descended from a tortoise
Yak stam	:	The members of this clan are fond of using ornaments in hands.

Rice and vegetables are their main food. They generally take three meals daily. They smoke tobacco and drink rice-beer. They are not vegetarian. The Riang women are expert weavers. Loin cloth, napkin, turban, breast-cloth, shirt, dhoti and sari are their common dress. They are very fond of ornaments. The Riang ladies profusely use necklace.

Their usual methods of acquiring mates are : marriage by service, marriage by mutual consent, marriage by bride-wealth, marriage by love, marriage by elopement, marriage by exchange, marriage by capture and remarriage of widow/widower/divorcee. Monogamy is the usual type of marriage.

The Riang have cosmological belief. What is noteworthy is that the Tripuri, the Riang, the Noatia, the Jamatia and the Uchai have almost identical cosmological belief.

The Riang are Hindus. They worship a number of gods and goddesses. There are both malevolent and benevolent deities. Their supreme god is Sibrai, that is, Mahadev. Some deities are worshipped daily by each family. Some deities are worshipped annually by the entire community; for this, elaborate arrangements are annually and occasionally made by the village council. The goddess of rice is worshipped gorgeously in the month of October. The Garia puja is celebrated jointly in the month of April. These two occasions assume the character of festival. These festivals are celebrated with rites, rituals, feasting, dancing, singing and drum-beating. The guardian goddesses of paddy and cotton are called Mai-nukma and Khu-nukma respectively. These two deities are mainly worshipped in October, after the famous Durga puja. This festival is variously known as Lakshmi puja, or, Kojagiri, or, Hojagiri. The Tripuri also call it by the same name.

The Hojagiri *nrtta* among the Riang is very distinctly different from the Hojagiri *nrtta* of the Tripuri. In the Tripuri Hojagiri *nrtta* movement styles do not crystallize the agricultural activities. Both the dances in the two communities are calendric and ritualistic in nature. But the emphasis and expression are quite different.

The Riang Hojagiri *nrtta* is a balance dance. The balance is simultaneously used in a number of combinations. Only young ladies perform this balance dance. Males remain seated at the background to sing and to play on musical instruments. Earthern pitcher, water, tray, plate, bottle, lighted lamp are the essential ingredients with which the balance is displayed. A few pot full of water are arranged in a row. The distance between any two pot is about four feet. Each dancer stands upon a pot. Her whole weight is placed on the crock. She stands on two legs on the narrow, small, circular brim of the jar. This itself is the first point of balance. Secondly, a bottle is placed and erected on the head of the dancer. Thirdly, a lighted lamp is placed on the top of the bottle. Fourthly, a big circular tray of wicker-work is placed on the tip of a finger of one hand and the tray is made to revolve. Fifthly, a dish is placed on the palm of another hand and the dish is made to swing right and left, upward and downward, and up side down. Sixthly and lastly, the dancer rocks her waist clockwise and anti-clockwise.

It is a wonderful dance. It requires long practice to attain confidence in displaying the various combinations of balance.

It is very significant to point out that the Riang had the tradition of an organically linked three-tier administrative set-up at the village, zone and state levels. The chief of the whole community was known as *Kami Kachkao*. He had a big cabinet which consisted of ministers, soldiers, physicians, dance master, music master and the like. It may be relevant to add the following information about the cabinet:-

Kami Kachkao	Chief or Raja
Chapia Khan	Prime Minister
Chapia	Minister
Huklai Chaudhuri	Zonal Chief
Chheng Krak	Chief of the army
Akchai	Priest
Vaidya	Physician
Yak Sunga	Swordsman
Darkalai	Assistant Priest
Dalai	Attendant to priests
Bhandari	Store-keeper & treasurer
Khang Kalem	Tax collector
Hazra	Administrator of a few villages
De Hazra	Assistant Administrator
Karma	Orderly
Dharia	Attendant to priests for annual ceremony

Daoa	Messenger
Kandal	Body guard to the Chief
Duguria	Band-party manager
Muria	Flute master
Musanai	Dance master
Rica-nai	Music master
Su-nai	Flute master
Bau-nai	Feast organizer
Som-nai	Cook

Jamatia community

The Jamatia occupy the third position in terms of numerical strength among the tribal communities of Tripura. According to the Census report of 1981, there were 44,554 persons in the Jamatia community.

It is important to recollect that after the dethronement of the king Lakshman Sen of Bengal in 1204 AD by Iktayar Uddin Mohammed Bakhtyar Khilji, all the native states of eastern India were in perpetual fear of attacks by the Afghans, the Pathans and the Mughals. This crisis continued for more than five hundred years. Tripura was attacked several times. To meet the challenge, the kings of Tripura used to give a clarion call to the subjects; accordingly the subjects would occasionally rush to the capital and thereafter to the war field. Both the Bengali subjects and the tribal subjects would thus serve Tripura. Immediately after the crisis, they would relapse into agricultural

seclusion. Only a handful of very courageous youngmen would be kept as standing army. The Jamatia are the descendants of that tribal standing army while the Laskar are the descendants of the Bengali standing army. In other words, the Jamatia are a contingent of the Tripura army of the past. They lost their martial importance after 1765 A.D. Since then the entire community fell back to agriculture and rural life.

The Jamatia settlements are mainly found in the central zone of Tripura. They prefer hills and rural villages for settlement. Shifting cultivation, plough cultivation, basketry, weaving, horticulture and foraging constitute their economy.

The social life patterns also are almost similar to those of the Tripuri, the Riang, the Noatia & the Uchai. But one striking feature is that the Jamatia have no clan organization.

Like the Tripuri and the Riang, the Jamatia are also Hindus. Their gods and goddesses are like those of the Tripuri and the Riang. Among these communities there are devout Vaishnava devotees and preceptors. The old generation is following Hinduism, while some people among the new generation are getting converted to Christianity.

Like their next-door neighbours, the Jamatia also put much importance to the Garia puja and the Lakshmi puja. These two occasions assume the character of festival. Indeed, suprem mportance is given to the Garia festival

by the Jamatia community. The entire community work in a body. They work in concert, collect subscriptions from every family of the community and make elaborate arrangement for worship, dance and discussion. The chief of the community and his council give the necessary leadership. The chief and his cabinet are held responsible for any act of omission and commission.

The Garia *nrtta* among the Jamatia is worth enjoying. The Garia *nrtta* incorporates a local mythology. The legend of the Garia god has been noted. One local scholar, Sri Krishnadhan Jamatia, has studied it in great detail. This weeklong festival is held in the month of April. It enhances their group consciousness and group solidarity.

The Chakma community

The problem of expatriation and repatriation of the Chakma people of the Chittagong Hill Tract (CHT) since the last one decade has made this community internationally famous. In Tripura, the Chakma occupy the fourth position in terms of numerical strength. Besides, there are Chakma in the Chittagong Hill Tract, in Mizoram, in Assam and in Arunachal Pradesh. According to the Census report of 1981, there are 35,079 persons of Chakma in Tripura. They are mostly found in Tripura's south-eastern hills bordering CHT.

The Chakma are good cultivators. They supplement it with such subsidiary vocations as animal husbandry, basketry, horticulture, foraging, fishing and weaving.

The social life-patterns and religious beliefs and

practices of the Chakma are not similar to those of the Tripuri, the Riang, the Noatia and the Jamatia. Ethnically, the Tripuri, the Riang, the Jamatia, the Noatia and the Uchai are close to each other; they may be taken to constitute a larger group. The Chakma have different life-patterns and religious belief; the Chakma and the Mogh are Buddhists by religion. The language of the Chakma is very much similar to Bengali.

The Chakma community consists of several clans. A clan is called *Gaja*. The names of these *Gaja* are noted below:

Amu, Baga, Barbara, Barsege, Barua, Bongja, Bong, Dionya, Dewan, Karoa, Karboa, Kora, Khanbe, Khiungge, Lambacha, Laskar, Larma, Lebya, Malima, Mangala, Mu, Onga, Poa, Poma, Phakas, Phedangsa, Phedangsiri, Phema, Ranen, Sangdoja, Seygeya, Tainya and Thea.

The Chakma are Buddhists. Actually their religion is a mixture of pre-Buddhists beliefs and Buddhism. In other words, in spite of the permeation of Buddhism, many pre-Buddhist rites and rituals persist even to-day. One such pre-Buddhist worship is Biju which is celebrated in the month of April. This ceremony has several synonyms: Vishu by the Bengalee, Bihu by the Assamese, Baishu by the Tripuri, and Biju by the Chakma.

The Biju dance and festival are ritualistic and calendric. It begins from the last day of the Indian month of *Chaitra*, and comes to an end on the 7th day of *Vaisakh*. The young boys and girls participate in the dance. The dancers stand in lines and in circles. Boys stand in one line and girls stand

in a separate line. These two lines cross and interlace. The movement styles do not crystallize agricultural activities. The styles crystallize games and sports, eating cake, drinking, feasting on pork, and plucking flowers.

The Bengali community

The Bengali community consists of four varnas, namely, Brahmana, Kshatriya, Vaisya and Sudra[5]. Formerly they were the residents of the western part of Tripura and subjects of the Tripura kings. After 1947, most of them have been expatriated by the Muslims. The present number of the Bengalees of Tripura will be nearly twenty lakhs. Their settlements are found in the western part, bordering Bangladesh and in the urban areas, towns and market places.

The Bengali people practise various occupations, which include agriculture, animal husbandry, basketry, business, fishing, gardening, horticulture, industry, plantation, poultry, weaving and white-collar jobs.

The traditional dress of the Bengalee consists of napkin, *dhoti*, *sari*, wrapper and shirt. Subsequently *loongi* has been introduced in imitation of the Muslims, and pantaloon has been added in imitation of the Britishers. They generally take rice, vegetables, fish & meat. They take three meals a day. Houses made of either bamboo and thatching grass, or mud-wall were the ancient examples of their hut. Next came house made of half cement-wall, half bamboo-wall and corrugated tin-sheets. The recent trend is to make pucca construction. Monogamy is the usual type of

marriage; and *kanya-dan* is the usual means.

The Bengalees are Hindus who worship various deities; so, there goes the proverb: thirteen festivals in twelve months. A long winter of about thirteen centuries of foreign subjection has left many a wood diseased and dead. Reformers and saints like Sri Chaitanya (1486 - 1533), Sri Ramakrishna (1836 - 1886), Sri Ram Thakur (1860 - 1949), Prabhu Jagatbandhu (1871 - 1922), Sri Aurobindo (1872 - 1950), Sri Keshav Hedgewar (1889 - 1940) and Swami Pranabananda (1896 - 1941) did a lot to clear the debris. So they are also worshipped. A large number of the Bengalees, more particularly the Brahmanas and the Kshatriya - Kayasthas, were converted to Islam and also to Christianity. The cleavage thus created has left far reaching consequences.

The Gajan *nrtta* is a calendric, ritualistic and ubiquitous dance. It is associated with the worship of Siva, and annually performed during the Indian month *Chaitra* (March-April). It is likely that the original idea behind it was supplication to the Sun-god for rain, light and bumper crops. However, the dance in its present form is not an agricultural dance and as such it is not mimetic of different phases of agricultural operations. Instead, like the Kathak dance of northern India and the Katha kali dance of the Malabar Coast in southern India, the Gajan dance is performed with the themes from the *Ramayana*, the *Mahabharata*, the Siva-Durga legend and the Radha-Krishna legend. Supplication to the god Siva for the redress of local

problems finds poetic expression at the hands of the local bards. From almost every village a troupe used to come out and display their art in the evening. The young and energetic boys magnificently dress themselves like Siva, Durga, Kartik, Ganes, Radha, Krishna, Ram, Lakshman, Sita, Kali, Dakini, Yogini, Hanuman and the like. Others in their usual dress accompany, sing songs, play on flute, beat drums and blow conch shell. The dancers usually stand in a row and face eastward. The movements are neither acrobatic nor violent. The main emphasis is on foot work. The dancers rock forward and backward on left foot, and spin round making a full or quarter turn.

The Dhamail *nrtta* is the contribution of the people of Srihatta. The expatriated Hindus from Srihatta have made their settlements in large number in the Barak valley of southern Assam, and in the northern part of Tripura. The Barak valley and the northern Tripura are contiguous. Here the Dhamail *nrtta* is performed. The Magh-mandaler vrata performed on the last day of the Indian month *Magha* (middle of February) is the occasion of this dance. As such it is calendric and ritualistic. But another occasion makes it neither calendric nor ritualistic, but social, secular and amusing. This is marriage ceremony.

In the Dhamail *nrtta* boys and girls, males and females, aged and young may participate. The dancers do not dress very magnificently; they do not dress to look like Siva and Durga, Rama and Sita, Radha and Krishna. They do not stand in one or two parallel lines. They stand in a circle, move,

gyrate, rock forward, backward and inward, applause, play on symbols and sing songs. The main emphasis is on feet, waist and hands.

The Manipuri community

The Manipuri constitute a large community in Tripura[6]. During the period from 1819 to 1825 Manipur was attacked, invaded and ravaged by the people of Burma. During this period of devastation thousands of Manipuri people were expatriated from Manipur; they took refuge in Assam, in Bengal and in Tripura. In Tripura the Manipuri are found in the northern and the western part of Tripura.

Many of the Manipuri are good cultivators. The Manipuri women are expert weavers. They resort to other cottage industries also. Marital relations with the royal families of Tripura have put them in an advantageous position and enabled them to compensate the loss caused by expatriation.

The Manipuri are Hindus. They perform various ceremonies and festivals. The Rash-purnima celebrated in the Indian month *Kartik* (middle of November) is one of the important festivals. During this festival they perform the worship of Radha and Krishna. The worship is accompanied by dance. The theme of the dance is the life and legend of Sri Krishna. This is a very graceful, calendric and ritualistic dance.

Occult dances

Occult dances are not confined to any caste or

community. Indeed, these are not at all dances in the proper sense of the term. In trance dances, a person temporarily becomes possessed by some benevolent deity. The deity usually possesses the person on Tuesday or Saturday or in Amabhasya. When he becomes possessed, his body trembles and his hands shiver. Many people get assembled with their problems and questions. He replies to those questions and suggests solutions. After some time, say half an hour, the deity leaves him; he comes down to normal human behaviour.

In therapeutic dances, a person while walking alone through an uncanny place or path, becomes possessed by a malevolent deity, or by the unsatisfied soul of a person who died earlier but for whom no funeral rites were properly performed. The person thus possessed, behaves abnormally. He laughs, dances, sinks in water, runs, reviles and smoulders. This self-contradictory behaviour is the symptom of possession. So his relatives consult with elders and invite an *Ojha* or *Kabiraj*. The moment the *Ojha* enters the distant boundary of the house, the sick person remonstrates. His frenzy reaches the climax when the *Ojha* enters into the house. Through spells the *Ojha* compels the deity or ghost or soul to narrate the incidence and disclose its identity. The ghost or soul demands the sacrifice of a big goat or pigeon as a condition for leaving the person. But the *Ojha* compels it to take a broom only and make the possessed person run fast at a distance on the eve of leaving. There he falls on the ground and lies unconscious

and tired. His relatives follow him, wash his body, bring back home and set him to rest and sleep.

In funeral dances, the relatives of the deceased person get divided into two factions. One faction represents Vishnu-doot, while another faction represents Yama-doot. The Vishnu-doot tries to take him to heaven, while the Yama-doot tries to take him to hell. A sort of tug-of-war takes place with the corpse. And ultimately the Vishnu-doot wins.

Efforts to preserve this cultural heritage

The problem of preservation of the tribal and other folk-dances of Tripura has been assuming a serious proportion. The problem is not, however, identical for all the castes and communities. Expatriations from the ancestral hearth and home has shattered the age-old establishments of the Bengalees and the Manipuris. They are struggling hard to eke out a living. But contrarily, interest in things tribal has considerably increased after independence. So tribal troupes are invited and assisted by the government in the Republic day celebrations and in public entertainment programmes. The invitation of the tribal troupes to display their dances in Agartala, and in New Delhi and in any city has considerably enhanced their respectability. Such invitation is hardly extended to the Bengali and the Manipuri troupes. So it is essential that invitation should be extended by provincial and the Central government to the Bengali and the Manipuri troupes also. This will add to the beauty and variety of the cultural landscape of Tripura.

It is important to recollect that Maharaja Dhanya Manikya (1490 - 1515 A.D.) brought dancers and singers from Mithila to develop the folk-dances and folk- songs of Tripura[7]. Subsequently, kings like Maharaja Bir Chandra (1862 - 1896), Maharaja Radha kisor(1896 - 1909), Maharaja Birendra Kisor (1909 - 1923) and Maharaja Bir Bikram (1923 - 1947) were great patrons of folk-dances and folk- songs. The government of Tripura has established one Music College in Agartala. A good number of non-government organizations also teach Bharat Natyam, Katha kali, and Kathak. But the newly educated boys and girls feel shy to indulge in the rural, folk-dances. The elites and the intelligentsia hardly appreciate these dances. Increased physical mobility, and a change in the ideal of education and new avenues of vocations have tended to decrease the interest of the rural folk also towards this rich cultural heritage. As such its deterioration is remarkable. The days of cultural renaissance under the patronage of the kings of Tripura are not likely to return!

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CHAPTER-VII

Traditional games in Tripura

Traditional games in Tripura

The hills people and the plains people of Tripura have inherited a large variety of games and sports which provide not only pastime and pleasure but also call for certain qualities. There are some games which require physical strength and others either skill or patience. Certain games are invented in imitation of the nature of animals and birds. Some other games have been prepared in imitation of household chores. Still certain other games indicate historical events, natural calamities, social problems, economic crisis and the like.

What follows is an attempt at narrating the traditional games of Tripura. The Tripuri games have been noted at length. This narration has been followed by a short discussion about the games played by the Bengali people. Once the respective cultivation season was over, the people of Tripura led a much more leisurely life.

The Tipra children have many games (= *thoonga*) which are also common to the Noatia, the Jamatia, the Riang, the Uchai and the Halam children. It is to be pointed out at the outset that with the growing urbanization and modernization many of the traditional games have been losing popularity with the Tipra children. It is only in interior isolated pockets that the traditional games are sometimes played even to-day. Some of the Tipra traditional sports may be noted here. Unlike the Bushmen of Africa[1], and like the Australians, the tribes of Tripura place great value on games of strength, wrestling matches and warfare.

1. Cooking game

The Tipra children pretend to cook, fetch water, collect vegetables and fuel. They collect sand and leaves and take them as symbolical representations of rice and edible vegetables which are formally cooked and distributed, and a pretence of eating is made. This is called *Mamai sangai thoonga*. Besides, they also pretend to make cakes with sand. This is known as *Aoang bati*. Among the Sema Naga children also this is a popular game which is an imitation of the domestic duties performed by the elders[2].

2. Pop-gun

The pop-gun called *Nailya oasa* is a very popular toy with the Tipra children. Its barrel consists of a narrow inter-nodal section of a green bamboo. It is about 8" long and nearly 1" in diameter. A thin and polished bamboo-split is fitted as a plunger. For bullets, the small rounded fruits of a tree called *Pichla* (*Microcos paniculata*) are used. Two such bullets: one at the muzzle and another at the back, are put. The plunger knocked down at the back pushes the rear bullet towards the muzzle. Before it reaches the muzzle, the bullet at the muzzle is fired off. As the front bullet shoots off, the rear one takes its place at the muzzle, and the gun is loaded with another bullet at the back. This pop-gun is popular with the Garo, Khasi, Lakher boys. They call it Sintalok, Watok and Phailaipa respectively[3].

3. Swinging

Swinging called *Longgai chaknani* is a very popular game with the Tipra children. The swing is made with the two long ropes or creepers, each about 15 feet long. The ropes are slung from a bough of a tall and strong tree. The ropes end with loops or nooses to which a short bamboo or a log of wood is fastened to provide a seat. To the Lakher children this popular game is called Ziza Puapa[4]. This is popular in Arunachal Pradesh also[5].

4. Bull-fight

The boys find immense interest in imitating bull-fight. The game is called *Khailaio*. Representing bulls, two boys at a time resting on the knees and hands on the ground at

a distance from each other, move slowly and in a challenging attitude and come closer with the head to head collision.

5. Bumble-bee flight

The bumble-bee flight (*Bangrai bira*) is a game in imitation of a bumble-bee (*bangrai*, i.e. *bhromora*) in flight. A boy lifts his body and pretends to fly. The player's ankles are tied to a vertical post. Several boys help him in lifting his body and tieing his ankles. Once off the ground, he stretches out his hands like the wings of the bee. In Arunachal Pradesh, the Adi children play the same game in imitation of a crow in flight[6].

6. Stilt

The boys find great interest in walking high above the ground with a pair of notched bamboo poles, each of equal height (about 7 feet). Thin bamboo sticks are suitable for this purpose. At the lower level of the poles, two resting places for feet are fixed. It is called *Kaldang*.

7. Wrestling

Various types of wrestling are enjoyed by the boys and young men. Hand-wrestling called *Salaio* is a duel between two young men. Each player grasps and locks the other to his chest and tries to floor his opponent, even forcing him to lie prostrate on his back. *Achugai phan salaio* is another type of wrestling bout between the two young men. Facing each other, the contenders sit on a flat space. They stretch out their hands and feet, one's heels and toes touching

those of the other. They hold a short piece of bamboo (about 1 ft. in length) horizontally on the ground. Now, each pulls the stick towards himself.The one who can draw the stick towards himself is declared the winner.

8. Pole wrestling

Pole-wrestling called *Oabai phan salaio* is an interesting game played by two young men. A smooth bamboo pole, measuring about 10 ft. in length and 3" in diameter is required. The players, facing each other, stand at a distance of about 7 ft. from one another. Each player passes one end of the pole under his right armpit and grasps it firmly with both hands. The common object is to push the opponent backwards and dash him down, if possible.

9. Stake wrestling

Stake- wrestling called *Musta seglaio* is a game between two young men for the trial of the strength of their wrists. A stake, measuring about 6" in height and 2" in diameter is required. The stake is vertically placed on the ground. Both the players grasp the stake with their right hands. The object is to pull the stake to one's own side. The players begin the contest with their bodies in half upright position. The wrestling competitions are popular with the Lakher and the Lushai boys also[7].

10. Frog leaping

The frog-leaping game known as *Yangla baharu* is usually played by boys. The game required a flat and clean space, preferably a courtyard. Several boys sit on their

haunches, and with hands behind the calves they hold their ankles. Then they start leaping in imitation of the frog. Among some people of Arunachal Pradesh this game is popularly known as Chowdia[8].

11. Tug-of-war

Tug-of-war is called *Dukhai satana*. It is played by both children and youths. It is played in the courtyard or in any open field. The players get divided into two teams. The members stand in a line, one behind another. The two teams catch hold of the two ends of a long rope. Each team tries to pull the other over a certain mark. It is a simple trial of strength.

12. Iguana race

Mufuk Satana is a trial of strength of a young man. A child is asked to cling to the chest of the man like a little monkey clinging to its mother's breast. The load of the child at his chest itself acts as a hurdle. One end of a rope is tied to the waist of the man, while the other end of the rope is firmly held by another man who stands at his back. The player then tries to move forward.

13. See-saw

Human see-saw known as *Kabang tisao* or *Balang burasa* is very popular with the Tipra young men. Two young men stand back to back with arms interlocked. Any one may lift the other off the ground on his back, and then the other man similarly lifts his partner off the ground. It is not a competitive game.

To the Miri community of Arunachal Pradesh, the human see-saw game is known as Muku Pitu[9].

14. Weight lifting

Khoolman tisao is a game of weight-lifting. It is a trial of strength of the hands. One man lies on back and the another man lies reversely and crosswise near the head of the first man. With his two hands, the first man lifts the second man straight above his head.

15. Hide & seek

Hide-and-seek game is called *Banbanla* or *bumani katar*. It is a very common game mostly played in the evening by the children, some of whom hide themselves in nooks and corners, and one seeks them. One of the children volunteers to become a seeker (*rutuknai*); another child sits in an open space and conducts the game; while other children hide (*hujaknai*) themselves. The conductor(*chaudhuri*) shuts the eyes of the seeker with his hands for a few minutes; by that time the hiders take their respective shelters. After a while, the seeker sets out to catch the hiders. He who is found out first becomes the next seeker, and the game starts afresh. In a cyclic order everybody's turn comes in this way. The common game of hide & seek is enjoyed by the Sema Naga children also[10].

16. Top spinning

The Tipra word for the top is *chur*. The tops of various sizes are made by the Tipras themselves from any hard

wood. Boys, youths and grown-up men find great interest in top-spinning. The top of the grown-up men is usually so big as to weigh about 2 kg. The top is spun with a string or a thin rope which is first spirally wound round its body and then suddenly thrown on a flat ground. A piece of flat, clean and hard ground is suitable for top-moving. A few tops are usually spun at a time. There is a competition amongst the players to dash down the opponent's top. The tops are also made to fight with one another. He whose top continues to rotate even after having knocked down the tops of others is declared to be the winner. Among the Sema Nagas, he whose top spins the longest, wins[11].

17. Bean shooting

Sukai is an exciting game of bean-shooting. Both young boys and girls participate in it. It is played with the seeds of a large creeper bean (*Entada scandens*).The seed is flat and circular in shape having the diameter of about 1½ inches; and it is brown in colour. The game requires a flat and clean space. There is no limit to the number of players. The players get divided into two teams. Two parallel lines-a base line and a goal line, are drawn, one apart from the other. The usual distance between the two lines is about 10 cubits. On the goal line two or three beans are set erect on their ends as targets, and the aim of the player is to hit the target with another bean held in his hand. The player is allowed to throw twice, first from outside the base line and then from the spot where the bean comes to rest as a

result of the first throw. If the game is between two individuals, the man who takes the try first has to give up his attempt if he fails to hit the target by the first throw.

The bean held in the hand of the player is placed on the toe of the right foot of the player. He makes a slight movement of the right foot so that the bean reaches the target. In his second throw, he takes the bean in his hand and stands on the left leg on the spot where the bean rests. Raising the right leg off the ground, he flicks the bean with the right hand to the goal bean. It is important to note that while throwing the bean, the right hand has to be placed below the right leg raised from the ground. If the target is hit, the same player continues his second round. Now, he has to place the bean at the joint between the feet and the leg. The same process is repeated and success leads to further rounds at each of which he had placed the bean in his previous attempts. The joints where the bean has to be placed at the time of initial throw of each round are as follows: toe, ankle, knee, thigh, waist, shoulder and lastly head. Failure at any stage leads to the change of turn. When the opponent fails at any one of the stages, the turn comes back to the first man who again starts from the point at which he had failed. If there are more than one player in a team the failure of the first player leads one of his co-players to begin his attempt from the point where his forerunner had missed.

This popular game with the seeds of *Ghila* (*Entada scandens*) is also played by almost all the Naga tribes[12],

Meithies, Lushai-Kukis[13], and Lakhers[14]. Besides, the game is also common to the Jamatia, the Noatia, the Riang, the Kuki, the Garo, the Halam and the Uchai of Tripura.There are certain other games which are usually played by the girls and women only. But the participation of boys or young men in these games is not prohibited. Among the feminine games mention may be made of *Mai-khar*, *Takhani baia*, *Babati* and *Takhoomtai*.

18. Rice hole

Mai-khar means 'rice-hole'. In this game six shallow pits are dug in a row to form a straight line. Another row of six similar holes forms another straight line parallel to the former one. Five small pebbles or bean-seeds are dropped into each pit. Only two players can play at a time. They sit on the side of each row of holes. The first player picks up five seeds from any one of the pits and drops one into each hole moving her hand anti-clockwise. In this way she takes out all seeds from the hole which stands next to the one into which she dropped the last seed. This continues till she finds that the pit next to the one into which she has dropped her last seed is empty. The seeds in the pit next to the empty one are taken out to her credit. Now comes the turn of her opponent who too repeats the same process. The game goes on till all the seeds have been taken out by the players.

A similar game is played by the Lakhers and Lushai-Kukis also. They call it *Longbeu-a-cha* and *Vai lung thlan* respectively. There are, however, certain points of

difference between the Tipra Mai-khar and the *Lakher Longbeu-a-cha*. Among the Lakhers, it is played by men only. Moreover, the Lakhers dig only five holes on each side, but the Tipras dig six holes on each side. The rules in both are, however, analogous. The Lushai-Kukis, however, dig six holes on each row, and the game is played by all. This game is played in rural Bengal also.

19. Crow's agent

Takhani baia is played by seven or eight girls who sit forming a circle. Out of the players one is selected as *Takhani baia* (crow's agent) who is to keep watch over the activity of another player who moves round behind the circle and tries to stealthily hide a small piece of cloth or any other thing behind any one of the players. If the *Takhani baia* can correctly identify the player with whom the object lies, she gets released and the turn of another player comes to act as the *Takhani baia*.

20. Bamboo splits

Babati is the game played by the two players with a number of short bamboo-splits. About 20 pieces of short splits, each about 4 inches in length, are required for the game. One of the players starts the game by taking all the splits on the palm of the right hand. The splits are thrown straight a few inches upward. Immediately after that the back of the palm is spread below to hold them. Some of the splits roll down, and the remaining ones are again thrown upward and fall on the palm. The number of splits that are retained on the palm after the second throw belong

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There is no time-limit. The tiger-side is defeated when its movement is haulted by blockade. The goat-side is defeated when most of the goats are eaten by the tigers. This game is an exercise of brain. It requires cool calculation and patience.

22. Dang gooli

Dang gooli is a popular, outdoor game played by young boys. It has few synonyms, such as *Danda Chooli*, *Dang baji* and *Dang gooli*. The playground for this game has to be of earth. The ground should be level, plain, wide open. It should be neither hard nor soft. Dry paddy-field after the harvest in winter is the suitable place for it. It has no definite boundary and size.

It requires only two players. They stand apart and face each other. Two wooden sticks of unequal length are used here. One stick is about six inches in length; another is about eighteen inches long. Both the sticks are handy, light, strong and thin. The long stick is called *dang* or *danda*, while the short stick is called *Chooli* or *gooli*. A mini-trench , about 5 inches in length and 1 inch in depth and 1 inch in width, is horizontally dug. It looks like a very small boat. This trench is the starting point. Here the short stick is placed length-wise. The long stick is held in the right hand of the starter; he mildly strikes the short stick; at this, the short stick jumps upward; immediately the player strikes the short stick with the long stock as forcefully as possible so that the short stick moves horizontally towards the opponent who stands in front about 50 feet away from the

starting point. The starter places the long stick on the trench breadth-wise. The opponent collects the short stick and stands on the spot of collection and throws the short stick from that spot towards the trench to strike the long stick. If he is successful, the starter 'dies'. If he fails, the starter continues. The short stick rests near the trench. The starter is not allowed to touch it with his hand and to remove it elsewhere. He strikes it with the long stick to throw it away. The opponent is not allowed to catch it and arrest its motion. So the short stick leisurely stops somewhere. The distance between the trench and the stopping point is measured with the long stick. Seven steps of the long stick constitute one unit. Each step has its local name. After the measurement, the starter repeats the process of placing, striking, throwing and measuring, etc. If he dies, the opponent comes to the starting point.

23. Dharia bandha

Dharia bandha is a popular outdoor game played by the young boys in the rural areas. It has several synonyms in India, such as *Aetya pateya*, *Doria bandha*, *Dharia bandha*, *Lon pati*, *Par Khela*, *Sara gari*, *Sur pati*, *Surmani*, *Tilli*, *Uppinath*, *Uppu pati* and the like. In 1982 a federation has been formed in Nagpur to regularize this Indian game.

The playground has to be of earth; it has to be level, wide and open; paddy field after the harvest is usually used during the winter. The ground should be neither hard nor soft. The ground is rectangular in size. Two sets of lines are drawn on the ground. Three long lines are drawn; these

lines are parallel to each other; the length of each is about 35 feet. Next, a number of short lines are drawn; these lines are also parallel to each other; these lines cross the long lines; usually five or six lines are drawn. All these lines are drawn with a spade. Though the ground is rectangular in size, it consists of several small squares.

The players are divided into two groups. Each group usually consists of four or five players. The players of one group stand on each short line and defend the ground. The players of another group try to enter into the ground, one after another. The defenders try to touch and 'kill' the intruders. It is a discredit on the part of the intruders to be touched. It is a credit on the part of the defenders to touch the intruders. If any one intruder can successfully enter, cross all the hurdles without being touched, pass out through the rear, he wins half the race. He waits for the opportune moment; he enters through the rear and crosses all the hurdles and exits through the front. Thus he completes the process; then the entire group becomes victorious. Then they change their sides. The defenders become intruders.

24. Finger opening and panja

The finger-opening test is a very simple game. It requires no playground, no paraphernalia, no formality. It is a test of strength of hands and wrist. It requires only two players. One player stands and closes the fingers of his right hand into a fist. The players do not box each other. The opponent player simply tries to open the tightly locked

fingers. Another variety of the test of strength of hands is called *Panja* in which two young boys place the elbow of their right hands on a table and clutch each other's hand and try to lean over.

25. Kabadi

Kabadi is a popular, outdoor game played by the young boys. It is locally known as *Hadudu*. The playground has to be of earth; earth should be neither hard nor soft, the ground should be plain, level, wide and open. The playground looks like a big circle. A straight line has to be drawn at the middle to divide the circle into two courts.

The players are equally divided into two groups; each group occupies one court. The players do not usually stand in a straight line. They stand in a curved row which looks like a crescent. Only one player from any one group becomes raider at a time. Only one raider enters into the opposite court at a time. Each group sends its raider alternately. The moment the raider enters into the anti-court, he must go on uttering and sounding the *Kabadi Kabadi*, *Kabadi*, or *Ha du du*. The raider must complete the raid in one breath; if he looses the breath, he retreats very quickly. Mere touch by any opponent is enough to render a breathless raider 'dead' . The raider tries to touch at least one opponent and return safely. The opponents try to catch him. If the raider swiftly touches one or few opponents and hurriedly and safely returns, then that very opponent becomes 'dead'. If the raider escapes their attempt, then all the attackers die. If the attackers are successful, then

the raider alone dies. From the raider's side, nobody can cross the middle-line to rescue the raider. While attacking and capturing, serious injury is strictly prohibited. Defeat or victory is decided by the death of all the players of any one court.

26. Lifting on the hands

The sport of lifting a child on one's hands is not a competition. It is an endurance test. It requires no playground, no elaborate arrangement. It requires two persons: one able-bodied man and one child. The senior man sits and places both hands and palms on a level ground. The child is asked to stand on the pair of palms. The child catches the head and hair of the senior man. The senior man slowly stands up and lifts the standing child up to his chest and keeps the child in that position for a few minutes, and afterwards brings down.

27. Mimic attack

The mimic attack game was a popular game. But nowadays it has lost popularity. It is reminiscent of external attacks and aggression, raid and ravage. The attacks were frequent, sudden and terrific.

Quite obviously, the game has no rule, no ground, no boundary-line and nothing of the sort. The players are divided into two groups and pretend to fight each other. Even two boys can play this game.

28. Swimming

Swimming is a popular pastime, a game in water as well

as a defensive mechanism. It is called *Santar*. For this game, lake or pond or river is required. These water-reservoirs constitute the playgrounds. Swimming means horizontally moving through water by the motion of hands and feet. No mechanical aid is allowed. There are various types of swimming, such as back stroke, breast stroke, butterfly stroke and free style. It is an imitation of the movements of duck, fish and snake in water.

In swimming, the players are not divided into groups or teams. It is not a team work. Individual swimmers try to move as fast as possible and thus to go ahead of others. The swimmers move in parallel to each other and try to surpass their neighbours. The distance to be covered is not very long. The usual target is to move from this shore to that shore of a river or of a pond.

29. Mimic begging

The mimic begging was a popular game. But nowadays it has lost its popularity. It is reminiscent of the disastrous famine of 1176 Bengali era (=1770 A.D.). Many people died. Many parents sold their children. Crimes became rampant. The game is to pretend to sell a baby for one *paisa* only.

30. Buri khela

The *Buri khela* is an outdoor game played by boys; they get divided into two teams. Two simple posts are erected apart with a long distance in between. One boy pretends to be an old lady (=*Buri*), and lies in ambush near one post and attempts to run & reach another post by a fluke. The

opponents try to touch the fleeting *buri* and thus 'kill' the team. The *buri's* supporter tries to chase, scare, touch & 'kill' the opponents, and thus indirectly makes the *buri's* passage secure.

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CHAPTER -VIII

Shamanism, Sorcery and Witchcraft in Tripura

Shamanism, Sorcery and Witchcraft in Tripura

Formerly Tripura was a princely state. It is located in the north-eastern corner of India. After 1949 it has become one of the states of the union of India. Tripura has heterogeneous populations, some of whom have inveterate belief in shamanism, sorcery and witchcraft, which leave little room for the natural religion of Manu, 6/92.

Tripura was much bigger than it is now. Geographically and ethnographically, Tripura had two parts: the western plains along the Meghna valley, inhabited by the Bengalees; and the eastern hills, inhabited by the Tipra, the Riang, the Jamatia, the Chakma, the Halam, the Mogh, the Garo, the Lushai and a few others. In 1947 the western half was forcibly annexed to East Pakistan. So, many Bengalees from the western half and many tribals from Chittagong Hill Tract had become fugitives and took shelter in Hill Tripura.

The preliterate peoples everywhere in the world are great believers in occult practices. The people of Tripura stand no exception to this universal phenomenon. Everywhere there are some individuals who specialise in occult practices. In the Engilish speaking countries such experts are usually known as shaman, sorcerer and witch[1]. In Tripura they are known as *siddha*, *ojha* and *daini* respectively. Above the three types of experts, stands the priest. He is usually a Brahmana. He is called *purohit*. He is a highly respected person for his traditional virtues. He officiates in worship, marriage ceremony and death rites. There is one more ritual expert in India. He is usually known as *acarya*. He has such synonyms as *acarya*, *grahacarya*, *daibagya*, *jyotish jyotish-sastri* & *saka-dvipi Brahmana*. He is an astrologer by birth and profession. He prepares horoscope, focecasts the future and suggests remedies.

What follows is not an analysis of the functions and position of the *purohit* and of the *acarya*. Their traditional functions have nothing to do with occult practices and black

magic. Their functions sometimes stand on the borderline of white magic. The problem before us is to explain the functions and practices of three types of ritual experts, namely *siddha*; *ojha* and *daini*.

Shaman & Siddha

The term Shaman was borrowed from a semi-nomadic Siberian people called the Chuckchee, among whom shamanism was a male occupation[2]. Webster goes deeper into the origin of the word shaman and adds that the root of the word shaman is the Sanskrit word *Sramana* or *Cramana* which means a beggar monk[3]; the name has been transferred to priest of the Ural-Altaic race. According to Webster, shamanism means primarily, the primitive religion of the Ural-Altaic peoples of northern Asia and Europe, in which the unseen world of gods, demons, and ancestral spirits is conceived to be responsive only to the shamans, mediumistic magicians. Hence, any similar religion, especially that of some American Indians, where the medicine man performs much of the same function is called shamanism[4].

The term *siddha* has been taken from the Sanskrit word *siddhi*, which means attainment, achievement or success. It has been transferred to devotees or worshippers, who are required to pass on from one esoteric practice to another under the delicate guidance of a pious *guru*.

The central feature of shamanistic practice is the ecstatic experience achieved in trance[5]. A shaman is a spirit-inspired wonderworker[6]. A medicine man possessed by his guardian

spirit should really be called shaman. Among some American Indian tribals, writes Ruth Benedict, in becoming a shaman, one is to be initiated by the supernatural beings, not by a father or an uncle[7]. The supernatural visitant gives a new name, instructions, prerogatives, privileges and power of curing illness. So the main test of a new shaman is his capacity to cure severe illness.

Similarly, in Tripura a *siddha* has a guardian spirit. He gets possessed by that spirit. He trembles in ecstasy. He wallows on the earth. He welters on the ground of a temple and dances with a glowing incense-pot held in his hands. At last, when excitement subsides, the people assembled ask question. He replies to various questions, narrates the nature of a problem, indicates its cause and suggests remedial measures.

Among the people of Tripura, particularly among the Bengalees, shamanism is not exclusively a male occupation. Both male and female can be *siddha*. A *siddha* can be either a male or a female; a *siddha* may belong to any caste or community. Any Hindu god can be a guardian spirit, but the goddess Kali is the most popular of all the deities in this respect . The usual external insignia of a *siddha* is a mass of clotted hair on his head. A temple of the guardian deity adds to the glory of his house. He does not become possessed at any moment. The guardian deity is not at his command. Only a few days are supposed to be auspicious for this purpose. Tuesday, Saturday and *ambashya tithi* (= dark night) and

purnima tithi (= full moon) are auspicious days. The siddhas do not claim a specific fee, but the devotees and the patients donate fruits, sweets, clothes, vegetables and money. So a *siddha* does not go unrewarded for his serviue.

All the siddhas are not equally proficient. Every *siddha* is not noble-hearted. Some of them are impostors and pretenders. Such false siddhas plant some helpers in disguise, who are called *chela*. The role of a *chela* is like that of a shaman's helper or spy. Such a fraudulent and greedy *siddha* often fails to cure a disease and to solve a problem. So, he suffers in prestige and popularity. Among some American Indian tribes shaman is likely to be clubbed or shot to death if he has lost several patients in succession[8]. But here an unsuccessful *siddha* is not so cruelly treated; he is simply avoided, criticised or ridiculed.

Sorcerer & Ojha or Goonin

Sorcery is the use of power gained from the assistance or control of evil spirits. Sorcery may be used to cause misfortune, illness or death . A sorcerer might, for instance, be hired by persons who believe themselves to have been wronged by others and who seek vengeance by sorcery[9].

In Tripura a sorcerer is known as *ojha* or *goonin*. At the time of addressing an *ojha*, it will be an impolite behaviour to use the word *ojha* or *goonin*. Instead, such words as *baboo* or *kabiraj* are to be prefixed or suffixed.

In becoming an *ojha* or *goonin*, one is to be initiated,

not by a guardian spirit, but by a senior *ojha*. The young disciple has to undergo some ordeals and instructions in order to become a member of the esoteric teachings. After the completion of the ceremonies and ordeals with which youths are formally invested with the rights of maturity, the food habits, movements and social relations of the new *ojha* also become restricted. He must guard his body with amulets and spells. He cannot go anywhere and everywhere. He cannot sleep alone. He cannot dive and go under water. He cannot move alone. While going outdoors, he has to avoid critical moments like dawn, noon and dusk. During these junctures, he may be left injured. He has to be abstemious, moderate and taciturn.

In Tripura there is a profusion of tales about the activities of ghost, spirit and departed soul. A ghost is known by several synonyms such as *bhoot, pret, pretatma, deo, dashyu, jin, pari, brahma dashya, puskara*.

It is believed that certain tragedies like epidemic, genocide, war, riot, great flood and devastative earthquake give birth to ghost and spirits. These tragedies usually leave none in a particular clan or family to perform obsequial rites, which are believed to be essential for deliverance from *preta-lok* (= land of the departed) to *deva-lok* (= heaven). So the apparition remains in a constant state of anxiety, anger, thirst, and longing for obsequial rites.

The ghosts have strong sense of liking and disliking. Banyan tree, palmyra tree, tamarind tree, bamboo, burial

ground, crematorium, marshy land, crossing of three roads, lonely place and deep forest are in their liking. They are afraid of fire, iron, mustard seed, the holy name of Sri Ram, incantation and spell. They prefer to go out during dawn, noon and dusk. They take delight in eating dry fish, palm candy and sweetmeat, and in penetrating a young lady, a prègnant woman and a menstruant woman. Any young man also may be possessed.

Many American Indian tribes believe that the agent of disease is a supernatural factor, and the common causes of disease are enchanment, transgression of a taboo, intrusion of foreign objects or beings and soul loss[10]. Tripura yields similar instances. Many people of Tripura believe that supernatural factors, ghosts, and constellation may cause disease and calamity. A person may be possessed by an aggrieved ghost, for such misconduct as waywardness, violation of a taboo, transgression of homestead-boundary during dawn, noon and dusk, urination on a plant or place dear to the ghosts and kicking a toy of the ghosts.

A person possessed by a ghost becomes sick. The patient's behaviour becomes abnormal. The patient suffers from delirium. The patient dances, frisks, laughs, grins, sings, hides, accuses, abuses, soliloquizes and murmurs. Such behaviour does not go unnoticed. The members of the family and kinsmen assemble, interrogate and get no reasonable reply. Then it seems obvious to them that the patient can be cured only by a supernaturally powerful *ojha* . But an *ojha*

is not a cheap commodity. He is not readily available. Every village does not have an *ojha*. A cluster of villages may have one well-known *ojha*. However, an *ojha* is called to elicit a confession. In the meantime, the patient is kept confined and tethed inside a house. The moment the *ojha* sets his foot on the border of the homestead, the patient gets the scent of his arrival. The patient or more specially the ghost within the patient, reacts violently. He prudes, vilifies and condemns the *ojha*. He asks: who has invited you? You go back. This sort of reaction leaves no doubt that the patient has been actually possessed by an evil spirit. Now it is the turn of the *ojha* to exorcise. The *ojha* mutters spell and beats the patient with a broom. The *ojha* breathes his spell on the body of the patient. It causes burning sensation. The evil spirit does not readily submit. The *ojha* goes on beating and breathing. After sometime, the evil spirit discloses its identify, points out the place of accident, explains the cause of penetration and demands human sacrifice, animal sacrifice, etc. as ransom. Bargaining continues. The *ojha* does not agree to pay any ransom, and forces the evil spirit to exit and to leave empty-handed. The *ojha* offers an old broom only. The patient grasps the broom with his jaw, runs away, tumbles down at the outskirts of the homestead-boundary and moans. The kinsmen follow hurriedly, bring him back and wash him with warm water. As a proof of its departure, the evil spirit has to break a bough.

The *ojha* or *goonin* usually does not demand any fee for treating a patient. It is not his profession. He does not earn

money from this. He is a peasant. He has cattle, paddy field, fishery, blacksmithy or carpentry and the like. His knowledge in sorcery carries a prestige value only.

However, people sometimes offer him presentation. Some *ojhas* are believed to derive profit from the work done by his ghosts at night. In return, the ojhas must offer dishes of dry fish. palm candy etc. to the ghosts. Some shamans also go unrewarded for their pains; the religious professional may derive no material benefit from his status[11]. Ramkali Kaviraj (c. 1904-1990) was a very prominent *ojha* in southern Tripura.

Recurring death of children of a couple is ascribed to a mischief called *marala*; it is transferred by the same mischief secretly performed at night at a juncture of three parths; in the following morning the first seer becomes the next victim. Minor diseases are ascribed to *soar* and *mukh-dosh*. Dry thatching grass and dry chilli are burned inside a jar to get red of *soar*. A black cooking-pot painted with lime or a painted image is kept erected in fields to ward off *mukh-dosh* on vegetables.

Witchcraft & Dainitantra

A witch is one who practises black magic only. He is regarded as possessing magical power by contact with an evil spirit. Unlike a sorcerer who must learn the rituals, witches are supposed to be born with the power to harm[12]. Witches are often viewed as epitome of evil. Witches like to move during the night. They kill their own relatives. They

are not tolerated. They are pitilessly killed[13]. Some preliterate societies, such as the Eskimo, the Murngin, the Canella treat witchcraft as the crime par excellence[14].

In Tripura also some preliterate societies, such as the Tipperah, the Riang, the Jamatia, the Noatia, the Uchai, the Kuki, the Halam, the Mogh treat witchcraft as a very serious crime. They inflict capital punishment. In the Bengali society a witch is known as *Dakini* or *Daini*. In the preliterate societies of Tripura a witch is known as *sikal* or *sekal* or *chekal*. Kaliprashanna Sen (1862-1934) has recorded tribal folklore about witch[15]. The preliterate people of Tripura believe that transfiguration is no problem to a witch. A witch lives like an ordinary villager during daytime. But a witch can metamorphose into an evil spirit at night. They make nocturnal prowl. Their molar teeth come out from the gum and glint like a blue light. The molar teeth try to make entry into somebody's house in search of human blood. The witches are cannibals. Their evil glance can bring about ruin.

The villagers have marked certain symptoms to single out a witch. A lean & thin body with a hungry look is the usual clue of suspicion. A stain of blood found in the countenance of a suspected person in the morning confirms the suspicion. Any nocturnal death at that time makes the villagers restive and passionate. They proceed to kill the accused witch. In 1881 A.D. one Kapiray Riang was suspected to be a witch and killed[16]. Such lynching has been continuing for centuries. Even as recently as in October 2003

Bridhalakshmi Deb Barma and Mangalakshmi Deb Barma of Rajudaspara, Ranirbazar, were killed on the ground of their being witches[17].

The concept of crime and punishment varies from country to country, from culture to culture and from community to community. The Crow Indians of America do not kill a witch[18]. The Bengalees of Tripura do not go to the extend of killing a witch. But among certain tribes of Africa and America witchcraft is an obsession that destroys what are elsewhere reckoned the closest ties[19]. Given the atmosphere of witchcraft, members of the society use it, as occasion arises, against their flesh and blood[20]. Corresponding phenomenon held in Tripura : more than a century ago, in 1881, Kapiray Riang's wife, Khichima, allowed Kalaha Riang and other Riangs to kill Kapiray[21]. It is important to add that at that time Dhananjay Thakoor was the Divisional officer of Sonamura; he took pains to arrest and punish the murderers[22].

Tripura stands between Assam and Bengal. Tripura is the meeting place of two types of agronomy: plough cultivation from Bengal, and shifting cultivation from north-eastern Asia. In other words, Tripura is the meeting place of two types of culture: Indian complex culture from the western side, and tribal simple culture from the north-eastern side.

Nietzche (1844-1900) in his studies of Greek tragedy analyses two opposite patterns of culture, namely the Dionysian and the Apollonian. In ancient Greece, Dionysus

was at first worshipped as the god of action, adventure, emotion, war and wine. Later, Apollo was worshipped as the deity of leisure, peace, philosophy, repose and restraint[23].

Ruth Benedict comments that the Pueblo Indians of America have Apollonian culture, while the Kwakiutl Indians of America have Dionysian culture[24]. Similarly, the Indian complex culture is Apollonian, while the Tripura tribal simple culture is Dionysian. The culture of Tripura is a mixture of the two types of ideals: Dionysian masculine spirit and the Apollonian feminism. Quite reasonably, beliefs and practices regarding shamanism, sorcery and witchcraft are not equally rigorous everywhere in Tripura. The tribes of the eastern hills of Tripura even to-day cruelly kill a witch. The Bengali Hindus live on the narrow strip of Tripura-Bangladesh border. In both the cultures, the Dionysian masculine spirit has recently penetrated separately from alien sources. And the trend of acculturation and sanskritisation is being reversed. So, the two cultures are getting apart from each other.

A shaman is a magico-religious curer of illness through ecstatic experience achieved in trance. A sorcerer is a magico-religious injurer, an anti-social ritual specialist, through secret use of supernatural power.

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CHAPTER - IX

Tripura temple architecture

Tripura temple architecture

An account of Tripurą's royal temple architecture remains an interesting section of medieval Indian history. Earlier works on this obscure subject include Chandroday Vidyavinod Bhattacarya's *Silalipi Samgraha*, K.P. Sen's *Sri Rajmala*, Samarendra Chandra Dev Varma's *Tripurar Smriti*, Brajendra Chandra Datta's *Udaypur Vivaran*, Adris Banerji's *Temples of Tripura*, Kartik Lahiri's *Tripurar Mandir*, Priyabrata Bhattacarya's *Tripurar Devdevi-Mandir* and Ratna Das's *Art and Architecture of Tripura*. A Banerji, K. Lahiri, P. B. Bhattacarya and R. Das have dealt with the subject exclusively and efficiently.

Tripura temple architecture, like the art and architecture of all other countries, has to be judged from the geographical and historical perspectives. The temple architecture is largely the result of action and reaction between geography and history, between matter and mind, and between soil and soul.

Tripura is geologically very young. The Bay of Bengal, which is well-known for its violent cyclones, has a direct impact on Tripura, Assam and Bengal. It causes heavy rainfall and terrible floods in several rivers and numerous rivulets. Tripura receives heavy rains which leach the soil and encourage the rapid growth of plants. A seed of a banyan tree carried by bird or wind easily gets germinated in a recess of a building. Tripura has a long rainy season. Tripura is deltaic and rich in alluvial soil. Clay is easily available. Basalt rock, granite rock, quartz and the like are conspicuous by their absence in Tripura. The eastern part of Tripura is hilly, while the western part has low valley and hillocks occurring alternately.

An appreciation of Tripura's past is vital to an understanding of its art and architecture. About one third of the inhabitants are immigrant Mongoloid communities who were seminomadic shifting cultivators in the eastern hills. The majority of the inhabitants are Bengali Hindus who are plough cultivators, traders, artisans and bureaucrats in the western part along the mighty Meghna valley. The mighty Meghna flows from north to south and meets the Bay of Bengal near Noakhali. The districts of Noakhali,

Comilla, Brahamanbaria and Sylhet stand on the eastern fertile valley of the river Meghna. A good number of rivers from Tripura, Meghalaya, Manipur, and Assam swell the volume of the Meghna.

A number of kingdoms flourished and perished in the Meghna valley which was a part of ancient Samatata[1]. In the eastern hills too a few chieftainships flourished but ultimately the Tripuri chieftainship survived; it united the hills and the plains; built an empire; dug tanks, and founded many temples. Tripura Parvatadhis Sri Sri Adi Dharma-Pha (C.635-675A.D) organised in 642 AD a big sacrifice at Sylhet; it was officiated by five Brahmanas of Mithila. The Brahmanas were offered five villages which came to be known as Pancha Khanda[2]. Thus a process of acculturation and sanskritisation took place between the two communities for civilised and constitutional life of which neither alone seemed capable.

The treacherous fall of Lakshman Sen of Bengal in 1204 A.D. at the cruel hand of a foreign foe, namely, Ikhtyar Uddin Muhammad Bakhtyar Khilji was a death signal to all the principalities of eastern India. Tripura was first attacked in 1240 AD. The successors of Adi Dharma-pha moved towards south-west and settled in the Gomati valley. Here also Tripura was not long left in peace; from 1240 to 1765 Tripura was repeatedly attacked, invaded, and plundered. Obviously, conquest and conversion by the iconoclasts went on simultaneously and brutally particularly in the Meghna valley.

During the post-Gupta period and when a number of dynasties one after another were ruling in the Deccan, one dynasty was rising and making itself felt in a remote corner of the north-eastern part of Bharat. This was the Tripuri dynasty. The energy of this rising dynasty continued for about thirteen hundred years (642 to 1948 A.D.). The Tripuri kingdom had come into being in response to a vital need, that of confronting an alien rule. In this respect, the contributions of the Tripuri kingdom and the Vijaynagar kingdom were almost identical.

Of all the principalities and chieftainships that together made the history of Tripura, none had a more remarkable impact on the art & architecture of Tripura than that of the Tripuri dynasty; their productions provided the foundations of Tripuri regional style of architecture. What the Pallava dynasty had done for the Dravidian style[3], the Tripuri dynasty did for the Tripuri style.

The Gupta structures were distributed over a wide area, and the early Chalukya structures were confined to one locality, Aihole, which had nearly seventy buildings. Unlike the early Chalukya structures and like the Gupta structures[4], the Tripuri structures have been distributed over a wide range of area. Whereas the Orissan style had a northerly development, the Tripuri style had a southerly and south-westerly development. The Tripuri style had its beginning at the Unakoti hills of Kailas-har in the northern part of Tripura, bordering Sylhet; in course of time it spread south-westward in such regions as Rangamati (=Udaypur),

Comilla, Pilak, Noakhali Chittagong, Akhaura, Amarpur, Kailagarh, Agartala and a few other places. The remains of its splendid buildings are still to be found in Tripura and the Meghna valley. The Maynamati structures near Comilla were not, however, produced by the Tripuri dynasty. For the sake of analogy it may be pointed out that there remains, till now, a probable gap between the Sindhu valley civilization and the Mauryan art and architecture. Similarly, there is a long gap between the Barak valley civilization in the northern part of Tripura and the Gomati valley civilization in the southern part of Tripura. In the Barak valley the Tripuri dynasty performed two big sacrifices; the first one in 642 A.D. and the the second one in 1194 A.D. Their predilection for tanks, temples sacrifices and Sanatan Dharma led them to patronise the production of the Unakothi *tirtha-kshetra* on a hill in Kailash-har during eighth and ninth centuries A.D.

The Tripuri principality was confined to Sylhet, Kailash-har, Dharmanagar and Barak valley at that time; it was first attacked in 1240 A.D[5]. A battle took place in 1240 A.D. near the Kusiara river. The adversaries were Chhengthoom-pha (c.1225-1250 A.D.) of Tripura, and Hiravanta Khan. The king of Tripura won the battle, but lost the land. A large scale Muslim invasion and infiltration under the leadership of Shah Jellal in 1257 A.D. into the fertile lands of Sylhet forced the dynasty to leave its capital. In the later part of the thirteenth century, the dynasty got settled in the Gomati valley. And in 1380 *Saka era* (= April 1459 A.D.) Dharma

Manikya of Tripura issued a copperplate to grant lands in the Comilla region. The interim period between 1240 A.D. and 1459 A.D. was politically stormy, and architecturally quiescent. From the standpoint of art & architecture this long period is dimly known. The hiatus is subject to further investigation.

The Indian temple architecture may be broadly classified into three major categories:- namely, the Nagara, the Vesara and the Dravida[6]; besides, there are a few offshoots and sub-groups. This classification indicates the dominant trend only. It is not an exclusive division.

The Nagara style was prevalent over a wide range of area, from the Himalayas in the north to the Vindhyas in the south, from the Punjab in the west to Assam in the east. The Maurya and the Gupta dynasties largely contributed to the development of the Nagara style. The chief features of the Nagara style are:- pyramidal roof composed of reduplicated cornices; centrally located main tower on the roof, usually surrounded by a number of minor, shorter towers; upward tapering towers; lenticular stone (=*amalaka*) upon the tower or a pot-shaped structure (=*kumbha*); a finial at the appex and moderate decoration of the external wall of the towers. The capital of columns at the gate is adorned with addorsed animals or pot (= *Ghata/Kalasha*) with green coconut, flowers, foliage, etc. Here boundary wall, attached pond, impressive gateway, etc., are usually absent. Arrangement of safety measures is poor.

The Dravida style was prevalent in the southern region lying between the river Krishna in the north and cape Kanyakumari in the south. The Chalukya, the Chola, the Pallava and the Pandya dynasties contributed to the development of the Dravida style. The chief features of the Dravida style are:- boundary wall, impressive gateway (=*Gopuram*); sacred water tank (=*Teppakulam*) inside the complex; pillared hall; successive imposition of storeys which taper upward and high tower, etc.

The Vesara style was prevalent in the central region lying between the Vindhyas in the north and the river Krishna in the south. The Solanki dynasty of Gujarat and the Hoysala dynasty of Mysore contributed to the development of the Vesara style. The chief features of the Vesara style are:- elevated basement; pillared hall; star-shaped cella; elaborated pierced windows; low pyramidal towers; grouping of three shrines together, and a progressive rise of the three towers towards the last one that surmounts the sanctum. Here, boundary wall, attached sacred pond and impressive gateways, etc. are usually absent. Arrangement against encroachment, enemy attack and defilement is poor.

What kind of architecture did prevail in eastern India? As Aryavarta had been held in high esteem by the people of eastern India, it was natural that the art and architecture of Aryavarta were imitated here. In other words, the Nagara style was adopted and adapted to suit the local conditions. Reverberations of the architecture of Aryavarta were heard

in Bengal, Orissa, Assam , Manipur and Tripura. But it was not a blind imitation, but a rational following. The local artists blended into a creative synthesis the Nagara style with the geographical conditions characterised by heavy rainfall, young soil and exuberant growth of plants.

The Pala, the Sena and other local dynasties of Bengal contributed to the development of a synthesis in Bengal. The adoption and alterations led to the growth of a regional style. It may be called Vanga style. Its main features are: low elevation, *do chala* or *char chala* type of roof, low tower, circumbulatory corridor around the temple, hemispherical ceiling of cella, simple and plain external wall, and sometimes grouping together of two shrines. Here boundary wall and impressive gateways are usually absent. This *chala* type of temples along with the Nagara type of temples are found in Tripura.

In Tripura the architectural production under the Tripuri dynasty have passed through at least three major phases. The Gupta empire had perished, but the renaissance it had brought about loomed large even after the extinction of the dynasty. By being a champion of the Sanatan Dharma, by organising at least two big sacrifices (642 A.D. & 1194 A.D.) and by successfully convincing the Brahmanas of Mithila to accept landgrants in 642 A.D. in the Sylhet region, the Tripuri dynasty consciously made efforts to draw Tripura out of her local and tribal outlook. While the impact of the sacrifices was ephemeral, the subsequent process of acculturation and sanskritization went a long way in the

entire history of Tripura. The Tripuri dynasty, like the Pallava dynasty, produced varying styles of architecture for several centuries.

The first efforts of religious architecture in Tripura were attempted, in all probability, at the Unakothi hill, now a decayed hamlet at Kailas-har in the northern part of Tripura. The efforts are represented by a large number of rock-cut images in the sylvan environment of a hill from the canyon of which a stream flows. The production required the substantial backing of a powerful dynasty. Who did patronise it? Though there are claims and counter claims, in all probability the credit goes to the Tripuri dynasty which had been ruling there at that time. The official chronicle of Tripura, *Sri Rajmala*, is inclined to give the credit to Maharshi Kapil and Maharshi Manu[7].

The Unakothi hill pictures the following legend : Once upon a time the gods and the epic heroes set out on a long pilgrimage towards north-eastern India. On their way back to Kailasha in the Himalayas, they made a night halt at Unakothi. They were to resume their journey very, very early in the morning and to see the hazy paths with the help of star-light; they were to be careful to rise up when the people all around were usually asleep. But unfortunately, they failed. So they were transformed into stones as soon as the sun arose the next morning.

There are numerous images at Unakothi; their number was so large that according to popular estimation, it was only one less than a crore, that is, *unakothi*. So the shrine

itself came to be known as Unakothi. Not only that, the adjacent area was sanctified and came to be known as Kailas-har in reminiscence of the famous Kailasha hill in the Himalayas. It is difficult to ascertain the names and number of images. It is equally difficult to identify them. It is now a rubble of crumbled rocks. *Sri Rajmala* has put on record the names of some deities, heroes and *avatars*; these images are of Surya, Chandra, Vishnu, Lakshmi, Siva, Durga, Panchamukha Siv, Sivalinga, Ganes, Rama, Lakshman, Ravana, Kal-bhairava, Rakshash, Rakshashi, Vasudev and the like[8]. The Unakothi *tirtha* owes more to chisel than to trowel. It enjoyed the patronage of a rising court.

The notorious iconoclast, Kalapahar, mercilessly damaged many of the images[9]. The devastating earthquake of 1897 also wrought indescribable havoc and reduced the shrine to a crumbling pile[10]. A structured temple built long before earthquake was also shattered. A glance of the extant remains indicates that the busts, because of the poor quality of the rocks, were course, heavy and naive. But who were the sculptors ? A semi-nomadic preliterate people who suddenly became rulers can hardly generate sculptors and builders and masons. For this type of work they had to enlist the services of the Bengalees, among whom the arts of architecture and sculpture had already attained a reasonable degree of perfection.

In and around Kailash-har-Unakothi-Dharmanagar-Sylhet, the Tripuri dynasty conducted administrative and

socio-religious activities during a long period of six centuries (642 -1240 A.D.). Attacks and aggressions since 1240 A.D. by the Afghans forced the Tripuri dynasty to leave that region. Thus, Kailash-har and Unakothi ceased to be the centre of architectural activity. The dynasty moved south-westward and the capital was transferred to Rangamati in the Gomati valley. The history of India abounds in examples of similar incidents. The fall of the Vijaynagar empire in 1565 A.D. at the hands of the Muslim principalities was followed by the forceful emigration of many Hindus further south in Madura[11].

In the Gomati valley the Tripuri dynasty conducted its administrative and socio-religious activities for more than four centuries (1300-1760 A.D.). The Gomati valley witnesses the second phase of the Tripuri dynasty's architectural activities. It was the scene of sustained architectural activities, the remains of which recall the period of vigorous efforts and exalted religious expression of the Tripuri dynasty. Here the dynasty reached the height of its power and prestige. Three kings largely contributed to the expansion and consolidation of the kingdom. They are : Dharma Manikya (1431-1461 A.D.), Dhanya Manikya (1490-1515 A.D.) and Vijay Manikya (1528-1563 A.D.). The new capital in the Gomati valley is variously known as Rangamati, Udaypur and Radhakisorpur. The Tripuri dynasty was master of several towns; but its place of great strength, name and fame is Udaypur.

The production of either rock-cut images or caves was

abandoned at Rangamati. Instead, many structural temples were produced here. The members of the royal family, ministers and administrators offered their direct and indirect patronage for founding temples and digging tanks at Rangamati and elsewhere in the kingdom. So these activities of several centuries turned Rangamati (=Udaypur) into a town of tanks and temples[12]. The following list contains the names of some famous temples built during the second phase :

Location	Builders	Temple
Udaypur	Dhanya Manikya (1490-1515)	Tripura-Sundari Kali mandir
Rajnagar	Dhanya Manikya	Bhuvaneswari mandir
Udaypur	Dhanya Manikya	Tripures Bhairav mandir
Udaypur	Dhanya Manikya	Chaudda Devatar mandir
Sitakunda	Dhanya Manikya	Sambhunath mandir
Udaypur	Dhanya Manikya	Vaikunthapuri
Lakshmipur, Maharani	Vijay Manikya (1528-1563)	Gopinath mandir
Udaypur	Uday Manikya (1564-1570)	Chandra Gopinath mandir
Amarpur	Amar Manikya (1577-1586)	Mangal Candi mandir
Udaypur	Rajdhar Manikya (1586-1598)	Vishnu mandir
Udaypur	Kalyan Manikya (1625-1660)	Chandra Gopinath mandir
Kalyanpur	Kalyan Manikya	Kali mandir

Udaypur	Govinda Manikya	Vishnu mandir alias Jagannath mandir
Udaypur	Govinda Manikya	Gondicha mandir
Udaypur & Gonavati	Govinda Manikya mandir	Brahma-Vishnu-Maheswar
Sitakunda	Govinda Manikya	Siv mandir
Udaypur	Ramdev Manikya (1673-1683)	Vishnu mandir
Rajnagar	Ramdev Manikya	Vishnu mandir
Comilla	Ratan Manikya	Rajrajeswari mandir
Pilak	Balibhim Narayan	Siv Durga mandir
Udaypur	Mukunda Manikya	Sri Sri Vrindavan-candra mandir

The religious and secular buildings of the second phase are mostly located in the Udaypur region which stands astride the middle reaches of the river Gomati. During the second phase(1300-1760 A.D.) the Afghan and Mughal warriors, having crossed the river Meghna threw the whole kingdom of Tripura into chaos and confusion, disorder and distress. During the stormy period a few kings resisted aggression on the one hand and built temples and palaces on the other. But they could not ultimately save Udaypur. Udaypur, like Rome, Paris, Moscow and Berlin was trampled by foreign foes.

In and around Udaypur there are remains of several worn out edifices, but the one which is in the best condition and retains most of its original appearance, in spite of

several attempts of destruction and renovation, is the temple of Tripura- Sundari Kali Devi at Udaypur. The Tripura-Sundari temple contains inscriptions to the effect that it was founded in 1423 Saka era (=1501 A.D.) by Dhanya Manikya and renovated by Kalyan Manikya, Govinda Manikya, Ram Manikya, Ranagan Narayan, Rani Sumitra Jagadiswari[13] and Radhakisor Manikya. Such an authentic record provides valuable information about this structural temple of Tripura. The **Tripura-Sundari temple** is the earliest of its kind in Udaypur.

There was a very old shrine where subsequently the Tripura-Sundari temple has been erected in 1501 A.D. This sacred place carries a famous legend. According to the *Puranas*, that very place where a dismembered limb of Sati, the daughter of Daksha, happened to fall, becomes a highly sacred place.

In Tripura the right leg of Sati fell and so the goddess here is called Tripura-Sundari. The Bhairava here is called Tripures, who is the bestower of all things desired. The right leg of Sati fell on a low hill; the hill is surrounded by low valleys and green fields. The credit of beautifying and renovating the ancient site, and erecting there a magnificent temple of the goddess Tripura-Sundari goes to Maharaj Dhanya Manikya.

The Tripura-Sundari temple, like the Jagannatha temple in Puri, the Lingaraja temple in Bhubaneswar and the Kali temple in Kolkata, dominates the whole town of Udaypur. Constrasting with the ornate treatment of the exteriors of

the temples of Orissa and Deccan, the external walls of the Tripura-Sundari temple is plain. Again, contrasting with the richly decorated halls of the Khajuraho temples[14], the interior wall of the Tripura-Sundari temple is plain. The temple stands not only on a hillock but also on a high & square (24 feet x 24 feet) platform; the thickness of the wall is 8 feet; the interior also is square (16 feet x 16 feet)[15]. The exterior circumambulatory *Pradakshina patha* is on this high platform. The exterior wall shows a few strong horizontal lines of bands set at intervals to bind the whole composition. It has heavy solidity, characteristic of all such early works. At a distance from the main temple, there are a few wide flights of steps; and wide stairways which lead the pilgrims to the water of the Kalyan Sagar. The temple faces the west. It has two openings : the main one is towards the west and a small one is towards the north. The ceiling of the main temple is hemispherical and plain. There is no window. There is little provision for admission of natural light and air. So the interior cella is muggy and stuffy. The main temple is not meant for an assembly of the general public, but a repository for the image. There is no intermediate chamber in front of the cella. There is an open gap between the main temple and the nat mandir; the nat mandir seems to be a later addition. The flat roof of the nat mandir is supported by pillars. The circumambulatory stands in between the two. A tin-roofed slaughter house (*bali-ghar*) for the sacrifice of animals and birds has been added to the western side of nat mandir.

The tin-roofed *bhoga mandapa* has been separately added at a distance towards the northern side of the main temple. Three structures (deul, nat mandir, bali-ghar) are on one line. A big tank (=Kalyan Sagar) dug later by Maharaja Kalyan Manikya to the eastern side of the temple contains many big fishes and old tortoises which swim freely and leisurely. Gander and goose freely waddle in front of the temple. The builders of this temple gave considerable attention to protect the temple from the natural calamities. The sudden rush of heavy clouds, gleam of the clouds, thunder, lightning, earthquake, flood, wild growth of vegetable life and depredations of wild animals were duly taken into consideration by the builders. Accordingly, they made the walls heavy, the roof *char-chala* type and the tower short and plain. Four pilasters have been articulated at the four corners of the temple. The pilasters are tapering upward and reach upto the eaves of the roof. The eaves have arch shaped edge. A *kumbha* has been imposed at the centre of the roof. The *kumbha* has been simply and externally ornated with series of shallow recesses all around the waist. A ribbed *amalaka* has been superimposed on the kumbha above the *amalaka*, there are a few *kalashas* of diminishing size & shape. One finial has been planted at the top. The temple rises to a height of about 75 feet. The Tripura-Sundari temple lacks feminine beauty but possesses masculine strength.

The image was not carved out in Udaypur. Formerly, it was in the Sita-kunda of the Chandranath hills, far away in

the distant lands of Chittagong. At the behest of Dhanya Manikya, the heavy image was carried from Chittagong to Udaypur by the army chief Rashanga-mardan Narayan and his colleagues[16]. As the image was made of black stone and of human size, the conveyance of the image from a distant land without proper road and mechanical vehicle, was a problem. A large number of bearers, carriers and drummers under the command of Rashanga-mardan enthusiastically overcame the pains of the problem. The image stands straight and is planted firmly. The image is not placed for occasional procession outside the temple. The image wears no garment. The raised hands have some common attributes. Inside the cella there is another small image, it is of the goddess Candi.

To ensure regular worship of the goddess, the king made elaborate arrangements which were largely feudal in nature. The king allotted lands for this purpose. The priests, attendants and suppliers were asked to enjoy the lands so long as they would continue to serve the temple in their respective capacity. The age-old royal arrangement has been rudely shocked subsequently, but the worship has been continuing for centuries.

There are many other temples of the same kind in and around Udaypur; prominent among them are : Tripures Bhairav mandir, Chaudda Devatar mandir, Bhubaneswari mandir, Brahma-Vishnu-Maheshwar mandir, Hari mandir and Kamalasagar Durga mandir. Most of the temples are in dilapidated conditions owing

to the destructive hands of man and nature.

The Tripures Bhairav mandir is supposed to be a building complementary to that of the Tripura-Sundari . The logic needs no elaboration. The Tripures Bhairav mandir is dedicated to Mahadev. So the temple is popularly known as Mahadev badi. It was originally constructed by Maharaja Dhanya Manikya; the temple was thoroughly repaired after about 150 years by Maharaja Kalyan Manikya in 1573 Saka era[17].

The Tripures Bhairav mandir is a small structure on a low basement; it is rather more a shrine than a temple, as it consists of a sanctuary only, though tin - roofed open nat mandir has been added later. Here the god is represented by a heavy Siva linga. The arrangement for regular worship of the god has been continuing even to-day.

The Chaudda Devatar mandir was originally constructed by Maharaja Dhanya Manikya. But where, when and how the temple was constructed, we do not know. At this distance of time and in the absence of accurate account, it is very difficult to locate the rejected site of the ancient temple. According to popular notion, the Tripures Bhairav mandir complex was the site of the Chaudda Devatar mandir[18].

The Bhubaneswari mandir stands at a little distance. The place is known as Rajnagar where the ruins of the old royal palace are to be found. Most of the temples of Udaypur are located on the southern side of the river

Gomati. Only a few temples and the ancient royal residential building were built on the northern bank of the Gomati. So the area came to be known as Rajnagar. Built on a hillock, the palace and the temples could have a view from above. The Bhubaneswari temple stands on a hillock and also on a high basement. It has an open circumbulatory and a smaller , shorter *mukha mandapa*. The entrance is through the *mukha mandapa*; the entrance is of the hypostyle order, probably to keep out wild animal intruders, particularly elephant and tiger. Structurally, the Tripura - Sundari mandir and the Bhubneswari mandir are almost identical. Maharaja Dhanya Manikya built it and dedicated it to the goddess Bhubaneswari; the costly image was made of one maund gold[19]. The aggressors and invaders stole it away; so no ritual is held. Long after the sad incident, Rabindranath (1861-1941) wrote two books, *Rajarshi* and *Visharjan*, taking theme from the story of the Bhubaneswari mandir.

Far in the south, towards the Bay of Bengal, near Chittagong, lies a *tirtha* called Sita-kunda. The *tirtha* is on a hill called Chandranath Birupaksha . The kings and queens of Tripura offered their patronage by building several temples and rest houses there[20]. Maharaja Dhanya Manikya was the pioneer of the Tripuri dynasty in building a temple at Sita-kunda. He dedicated it to Shambhunath. So the temple came to be known as Shambhunath mandir. The Sambhunath temple significantly differs from Dhanya Manikya's other temples in Udaypur. The Sambhunath

temple is not ornate. It has open circumbulatory. The external wall has a few recesses. The roof is flat. But above the roof there are two towers; these two towers are not identical. The first tower is short with four sides and sharp edges. The second tower is on the cella; it looks like a dome. A few *kalashas* have been superimposed on the towers. The top has been adorned with *cakra*.

To the above list of prominent temples of Dhanya Manikya may be added the names of a few more temples which are located in and around Udaypur. These are Vishnu mandir, Hari mandir, Jhulan mandir etc. Not only that, Dhanya Manikya constructed a residential palace, built forts, dug several big tanks, strictly reduced the number of human sacrifice[21], arranged to translate some sacred books from Sanskrit into Bengali, developed a library and brought from Mithila expert dancers, singers and musicians for a better training of the local artists.

The history of Tripura has it to remember and remark that during the eventful reign of Dhanya Manikya (1490-1515 A.D.) while his brave soldiers under the command of Ray Kacag, Ray Kacham and Rashanga-mardan Narayan were expanding the horizon of the Tripuri empire, the bricklayers were building temples, forts and palace, the writers were translating books, the diggers were digging large tanks, the local artists were perfecting their art, the court poets were continuing to write the history and the Sakta temples were undergoing a monumental reformation. Thus, war against a foreign aggressor, Hussain

Shah (1493-1519 A.D.), and peace process against disease & ignorance continued simultaneously. So, under Dhanya Manikya, art and architecture flowered profusely in Tripura while the empire expanded in all directions.

Dhanya Manikya's personality overshadows that of everyone who had gone before him and of all who came after him . Dhanya's demise was followed by a short period of decline. The decline was followed by the rise of another powerful rule under Maharaja Vijay Manikya (1528-1563 A.D.). The genius of Vijay Manikya lay in the martial art. Near Udaypur he built a temple and dedicated it to Gopinath in 1470 Saka era (=1548 A.D.)[22]. It has been destroyed.

The next temple builder was Uday Manikya who was rather a black sheep in the history of Tripura. He built a temple at Chandrapur near Udaypur and dedicated it to Chandra Gopinath; it has been destroyed; only ruins are to be found.

Amar Manikya did two commendable things at Udaypur : a big tank was dug and a Jagannath temple was built near the Amar Sagar[23]. In view of the recurrence of attacks and invasion from the western front by the Afghans and the Mughals, Amar Manikya (1577-1586 A.D.) temporarily shifted his capital eastward on the upper reaches of the river Gomati. There the king undertook to dig tanks, to erect temples and to build other buildings. On the east bank of the Amar Sagar the king erected two free-standing columns in front of an edifice[24]. The new

township came to be known as Amarpur. Most of those buildings, including a three-storeyed edifice, are ruined. The king of Arakan, Meng Phalaung alias Sikandare Shah (1571-1593 A.D.) and the king of Tripura waged a battle on a flimsy ground. The Arakan army ravaged Udaypur and the southern part of Tripura during the month of *Chaitra* 1507 Saka era (March-April 1586 A.D.); they destroyed the tower of the Tripura-Sundari temple and stole the golden *kalasha*. Amar Manikya died in exile in 1508 Saka era.

Amar's son and successor was Rajdhar Manikya (1586-1600 A.D.). In August 1586 A.D. Rajdhar returned to Udaypur. An uphill task was waiting for him. He was a devout Vaishnava. He built a temple at Udaypur near the bank of the Gomati[25]. Deeply absorbed in circumambulation and meditation the king rolled down the river and was drowned in c.1600 A.D. The mandir was a shrine built in the same design as that of the Tripura-Sundari mandir.

By stretching out upon Tripura the hand of invasion and imprison , the greedy Mughals unleashed a reign of terror and damaged tanks and temples. Kalyan Manikya saved Tripura at this critical moment. The king took steps to repair and protect the temples. The tower of the Tripura-Sundari temple was repaired by him, and a large tank was dug to the north-eastern side of the temple. The Tripures Bhairav temple also was repaired in 1573 Saka era (=1651 A.D.) by him, and a surrounding wall was raised around the complex. Another temple at Kailagarh (=Kamala Sagar) built by Vijay

Manikya was thoroughly repaired by Kalyan Manikya.

Kailagarh lies at a distance of about 27 km north-west of Udaypur. It was a fort. With the digging of a large tank (=Kamala Sagar) by Kamala Devi, the queen of Dhanya Manikya, and the erection of a Kali mandir by Vijay Manikya, it became a shrine. The temple has been repaired by Kalyan Manikya. The temple is west facing. Its design is like that of the Tripura-Sundari mandir. Since then it came to be known as Kali mandir or Kali-badi. The temple stands on a strategic site and has been subjected to several attacks. It was again repaired by Ratan Manikya (1685-1712 A.D.) who inscribed an inscription. The Tripura era '1097' has been inscribed. It means it was repaired in 1687 A.D. during the reign of Ratan Manikya. Upon the desecration of the temple as well as the image of the goddess Kali, another image of the goddess Durga has been installed. The deity is here Mahish-ashura-mardini, she has ten hands with attributes. The rescuing goddess is about to transfix the prancing giant. The insufficient record of the inscription of Ratan Manikya does not categorically clarify the shrouded history of this temple.

The Chandra Gopinath temple was built by Maharaj Kalyan Manikya. It is in Udaypur, more specifically within the Tripures Bhairav mandir complex. The complex is popularly known as *Siv-badi*. The Chandra Gopinath temple is popularly known as Chaudda Devatar mandir. Probably here within this complex, Maharaj Dhanya Manikya built the Chaudda Devatar mandir. It is a mere conjecture. But

that the Chandra Gopinath mandir was built by Kalyan Manikya is ascertained by written records. There is an inscription on its wall to the effect that it was constructed by Kalyandev. It was dedicated to Gopinath on the fifth day of *Ashad* 1572 Saka era (=1650 A.D.)[26]. The Chandra Gopinath temple has been partly damaged. It is a south-facing shrine.

The architectural pattern of several temples is identical. To this group may be included Tripura-Sundari temple, Tripures Bhairav temple, Bhubaneswari temple, Kamala sagar Durga temple (alias Kali temple), Vishnu temple, Chandra Gopinath temple (alias Chaudda Devatar temple) and a few others. No ritual is held in the Chandra Gopinath mandir.

Like Amar Manikya, Kalyan Manikya was forced to make an alternative capital in a remote place. Kalyan Manikya selected a site many miles north-east of Udaypur. It came to be known as Kalyanpur where a temple had been built and dedicated to the godess Kali[27]. The Kali temple has been completely ruined. The temple has been damaged by an earthquake of 1918A.D. It was more a shrine than a temple In design it belonged to the Dhanya Manikya group of temples.

After Kalyan Manikya,the next ruler was Govinda Manikya. Immediately after his accession in June 1660, he started constructing a temple at Udaypur. The temple was ceremonially dedicated to Lord Vishnu in the month of *Kartik* 1583 Saka era (=November 1661 A.D.)[28]. There was

an inscription the the effect that Kalyan Manikya's worthy sons, Govinda and Jagannatha, were like Rama & Lakshmana, Yudhisthira & Arjuna. They jointly built it in the memory of their departed mother Sahabati. The temple became known as Jagannath mandir or Jaganather deol, though it was officially Vishnu mandir.

For the construction of the Vishnu mandir (alias Jagannath mandir) substaintial resources in man, money & materials were placed at the disposal of the architect. This temple significantly differs from the Tripura-Sundari group of temples. The difference in design is remarkable and radical. This temple owes its character not only to trowel but also to chisel. A glance would at once reveal that the Vishnu mandir (=Jagannath temple) in all its details, was much more ornate in style than the heavy sixteenth century shrine Hari mandir at its side on the east bank of the *pooratan dighi* (alias Jagannath dighi). A number of temples were built on the banks of this large tank. The tank beautifies the edifices,while the edifices dignify the tank. Srishchandra Chattopadhyay, rather than Kasinath Dikshit, is more correct to comment that the Vishnu mandir (alias Jagannath mandir) has been built in imitation of the Saranath temple[29]. The chief distinguishing mark of the Vishnu mandir (alias Jagannath mandir) lies in the high tower surrounding the sanctum which presents a marked contrast to the early low-roofed temples. The temple was east facing and at the entrance there was a portico supported by pillars.

But what type of tower did they built in the case of Vishnu mandir (alias Jagannath mandir) of Udaypur, Tripura? Who were the artisans and the architects? Did the king not bring the masons from Orissa? It is very difficult to categorically reply? The temple has been very badly damaged by an earthquake and growth of plants and by human agencies. It may be reasonable to surmise that the artisans and architects were brought from Orissa, and the tower was similar to that of either Saranath or Buddh-Gaya. Ash-coloured slate stone was used. Quite reasonably, the tower was tapering upward, or it had an inward curvature towards the top. The exterior of the tower was rich in ornament and refined in treatment. The tower had several recesses where miniature images of some deities were fixed. There was considerable restraint in the ornamentation of the temple. The courtyard was surrounded by dwarf walls to keep out animal intruders. The tower has fallen down completely, but the base structure remains even to-day. Modelled upon the Saranath or Buddh-Gaya or upon any temple of Orissa the Vishnu mandir (alias Jagannath mandir) recalls the glory and grandeur of the Tripura court. Even in its dilapidated condition, one can imagine the elegance of the temple.

Govinda Manikya's step-brother Chatra Manikya (1662-1666) usurped the throne with the Mughal help. Chatra Manikya built a shrine which is in dilapidated condition now. While in exile in Arakan and Chittagong, Govinda Manikya and Jagannathdev built a residence and dug tank

in the Chittagong Hill Tract; that place came to be known as Dighi Nala.

Upon Chatra Manikya's death, Govinda Manikya hastened to Udaypur and was proclaimed Raja for the second time (1667-1673). Govinda Manikya continued to buy peace at the cost of Tripura's position and purse. His queen Gonavati was a pious lady; she undertook to build a group of three temples at Udaypur. The first temple was dedicated to Lord Vishnu in *Vaisakh* 1590 Saka era (=1668 A.D.)[30]. An inscription to the effect that it was dedicated to Vishnu in 1590 Saka era by Govinda Manikya and Gonavati Mahadevi, helps a lot to authenticate the history of Tripura temple architecture. The three temples have been dedicated to Brahma, Vishnu and Maheswar. It is a triple temple : three complete temples of exactly the same design & dimension built side by side & connected only by their adjacent transepts and with a common courtyard & all facing south-ward. In design and dimension, these three temples of Brahma-Vishnu-Maheswar belong to the group of temples built by Dhanya Manikya about one hundred fifty years ago. The notorious act of usurption by Chatra Manikya (1662-1666) left the treasury empty and the administration shattered. So Govinda Manikya avoided the costly design of the Vishnu mandir (alias Jagannath mandir) built in 1583 Saka era (=November 1661), and reverted to the less costly design of Dhanya Manikya. The images of these three temples have been desecrated and destroyed by the barbarous invaders. So no ritual is held here in these temples.

Govinda Manikya's successor was Maharaja Ramdev Manikya (1673-1683 A.D.). Ramdev built at least two temples at two separate sites in Udaypur. Both the temples were dedicated to Lord Vishnu and were almost similar to the temples of Dhanya Manikya. The first temple was built within the Tripures Bhairav mandir complex and dedicated to Lord Vishnu in *Jaisthya* 1595 Saka era (= 1673 A.D.) This is popularly known as Lakshmi-Narayan mandir. An inscription to this effect provides authentic history[31]. The other temple of Vishnu by Ramdev has been built on the north bank of the Gomati, and it is on a plateau towards the south-west corner of the ruined palace; it contains a monumental inscription to the effect that it has been dedicated to Lord Vishnu in *Magha* 1599 Saka era (= 1678 A.D.)[32]. The invaders had desecrated both the temples and grabbed the images. So no ritual is held in these two temples.

The congregating of a number of temples on one site is not uncommon in India. Though they represent different beliefs, co-existence pauses no problem and indicates the sublime spirit of toleration. The Khajuraho group of temples in central India were constructed during the reign of the Chandela dynasty with that noble spirit. In Udaypur of Tripura there are at least two sites containing a number of temples. The Tripures Bhairav mandir complex has a few temples; while at a little distance towards east, the Gonavati temple complex also has three temples of three distinct deities.

Govinda Manikya's younger brother Jagannathdev had a very pious daughter whose nickname was Dwitiya. She dug tanks and built shrines here and there. The Lalmai hill near Comilla was such a place where a temple was dedicated to Mahishashura mardini.

Like Govinda Manikya, the next ruler Ramdev Manikya avoided giving least offence to the Mughals. Ramdev's brother-in-law Balibhim Narayan was an energetic & sincere well-wisher of the royal family. Like Amar Manikya and Kalyan Manikya, Balibhim Narayan also built up an alternative capital to save the royal treasures from the fury of foreign attacks by the Mughals. With Ramdev's consent, Balibhim built up the alternative capital at Pilak[33], a few miles to the south of Udaypur. Pilak is surrounded by a rim of hills. Pilak is naturally guarded by the Tulashi hills and Hrishyamukha in the west. Pilak is a large valley dotted with a few island-like hillocks. There in the valley tanks were dug, and temples were built on the hillocks and Jolai was appointed. So it came to be known as Jolaibari. But the bold and patriotic attempt of Balibhim was defeated; he was treacherously arrested and killed. Pilak was subjected to ravage and in the entire fertile valley a large Muslim settlement grew up. All the temples have been left destroyed and the images of Surya, Vishnu, Siva, Durga, Kali, Hanuman, Ganes, Nrisingha etc. mutilated. The burnt, thin, square bricks of those edifices were pulled out and used for other purposes. After 1947 A.D. the Muslims left after exchanging land with the Hindus of the Khandal-Noakhali region

Ratna Manikya (1685-1712) had a very stormy reign. He repaired the Kamala Sagar temple in 1097 T.E. (=1687 A.D.) and again installed another image of Dasabhuja Bhagavati from Srihatta. The Raj-rajeswari Kalika Devi mandir at Comilla was built and an image from Kasidham was duly installed by Ratna Manikya[34].

The above is a brief and incomplete narration of the productions of the Tripuri dynasty in the Gomati valley. The architectural activity of Tripura was at its height during the second phase when the capital had been at Udaypur. That it was an expression of exalted religious devotion is evident from the prolific productions. Travellers and tourists to-day can admire the heavy solidity of the buildings as well as the deep devotion of the dynasty, though more than five centuries have passed since these had been started, though nature threatens constantly; though invasion & desecration have passed over them during the time of the Tripuri dynasty's decline, and though Udaypur, the capital of Tripura, has been abandoned, and though most of the temples have been left bereaved of images and rituals. Besides the temples, there are the ruins of palaces, edifices, forts and residential houses scattered all over Tripura in hillocks, jungles, plateaus and mounts. Udaypur epitomizes all that is medieval Tripura. Almost every road, every ruin, every tank, every temple and every village in & around Udaypur has a story to tell.

The third phase of the temple architecture in Tripura centres round Agartala. It covers a period of two centuries

(1747-1948 A.D.). The cause of abandoning Udaypur is the same as that of deserting Kailash-har : foreign aggression. Like Rama-Lakshmana, and the Pandavas, Krishna Manikya of Tripura being unable to withstand the attacks of Samser Gazi, evacuated Udaypur with a sorrowful heart & weeping eyes and lived in hills & jungles for twelve years (1747-1759). In 1760 he started building residence and temple at old Agartala, about 55 km. towards north-east from Udaypur.

The third phase has a great constitutional significance, because it marked the recession of Muslim hegemony on the one hand, and the rise of the paramountcy of the East India Company on the other.

The following list contains the names of prominent temples built during the third phase :

Location	Builder	Temple
Old Agartala	Krishna Manikya	Chaudda Devatar mandir
Akhaura	Krishna Manikya	Radha-Madhav mandir
Comilla	Krishna Manikya	Jagannath mandir
Vrindaban	Rajdhar Manikya	Rashbihariji mandir
Varanasi	Durga Manikya	Siv mandir & Dharmasala
Old Agartala	Durgamani Uzir	Siv mandir
New Agartala	Krishnakishor Manikya	Hanuman mandir
Bhut galli, Vrindavan	Isanchandra Manikya	Tripura Kunja

New Agartala	Radhakisor Manikya	Mangal-candi mandir
New Agartala	Radhakisor Manikya	Jagannath mandir
New Agartala	Radhakisor Manikya	Nrisingha mandir
New Agartala	Birendrakisor Manikya	Durga mandir
New Agartala	Birendrakisor Manikya	Radha-Vrindabancandra mandir
New Agartala	Prabhabati Devi	Dharmasala & Siva mandir
New Agartala	Prabhabati Devi	Radha-Syamsundar mandir
New Agartala	Bir Bikramkisor Manikya's mother Arundhuti Devi	Siv mandir
New Agartala	Bir Bikramkisor Manikya	Uma-Maheswar mandir
New Agartala	Bir Bikramkisor Manikya	Benuban Bihar

The religious and secular buildings of the third phase are mostly located in the Agartala region which stands astride the lower reaches of the river Haora. The newly built (1760 A.D.) capital was located on the southern bank of the river Haora. The capital was again shifted (1838 A.D.) west-ward on the north bank of the same river Haora. The two capitals have an intervening gap of about five miles, and were variously known as Puratan Haveli & Nutan Haveli; Puratan Agartala & Nutan Agartala. The old city (old Agartala) is in decline; while

the new one (new Agartala) is thriving. However, the old city contains the ruins of palace, tanks and temples; only the Chaudda Devatar mandir has not been shifted to new Agartala. Ritual is held daily and annually in the Chaudda Devatar mandir. For the purpose of the present study, the two towns are taken as a whole and referred to as Agartala. The Agartala phase begins with the Chaudda Devatar mandir.

The process of urbanization at Agartala on both sides of the Haora river began in 1760 A.D. when the fugitive king Krishna Manikya started building a palace and a temple at Agartala. Krishna Manikya's Agartala subsequently came to be known as old Agartala. The first temple built at old Agartala was called **Chaudda Devatar mandir**. The southern bank of the Haora is the site; it is a fertile valley. The temple is west-facing. It stands on a low basement. It has flat roof. The roof is superimposed by a *stupa,* a big *ghanta*, a small *ghanta*, a *kalasha* and a finial at the top. The entrance is arch-shaped; the cella is square; the wall is not ornate; the nat mandir has four-thatched tin-roof; the nat mandir is not enclosed with side-wall; the roof is supported by thin pillars. The entire complex is wide, open and has other structures for the priests, tourists and *bhoga mandapa*.

The Chaudda Devatar mandir has a very special prerogative; the deities are highly respected as the *Kula devata* (=family deity) of the royal family[35]. A group of fourteen deities, namely Hara, Uma, Hari, Ma, Vani, Kumar, Ganapa, Vidhi, Ksha, Avdhi, Ganga, Sikhi, Kama, Himadri,

are worshipped here. The deities are represented here by their bust-size metallic images. A large number of priests and attendants, have been engaged to ensure the worship. Every day at least one he-goat has to be sacrificed. The temple bursts into activities during the weeklong annual worship and festival (=*Kharci puja*) held in the month of *Ashad*.

About ten miles towards west from old Agartala, in the Akhaura region Krishna Manikya took three socio-religious projects. At Kalika-ganj (alias Radha nagar) one Raghunathdas Vrajabashi was worshipping Radha-Madhav in a temple made of bamboo & thatching grass. In 1765 the king arranged to dig a pair of two large tanks near the worn out temple. In 1768 land was granted for the deity and for the worshipper through a deed, dated *Magh* 1689 Saka era (=January-February 1768 A.D.). In 1775 the task of building a pucca temple was undertaken in between the two tanks. Krishna Manikya and Jahnavi Devi formally and ceremonially dedicated the temple to Radha-Madhav in *Magha* 1697 Saka era (=January-February 1776 A.d.). The temple contained an inscription to that effect. The temple was two-storeyed; five towers were superimposed on the roof. So it was popularly called Pancha-Ratna mandir[36]. The external wall had recesses to receive *Dasavatara* images. The images of Jagannath, Balarama and Subhadra were also placed inside the temple. Wrecked by the earthquake of 1897 A.D. and desecrated by the communal riots, the temple is in pathetic ruins.

The Satera-Ratna mandir in Comilla was the most remarkable production of Krishna Manikya. Ratna Manikya (1685-1712) initiated the work, and built up to the plinth level only. Krishna Manikya completed it. Lands were donated for the maintenance of the temple. A big tank was dug and rest houses built within the temple complex. In the month of *Chaitra* 1700 Saka era (=March-April 1779 A.D.) the temple was ceremonially and solemnly dedicated to Jagannatha-Balarama-Subhadra[37]. The towers present the most remarkable feature of the Jagannath temple (alias Satera-Ratna mandir) The central tower erected on the centre of the flat roof was more than 100 feet in height. The remaining sixteen towers were separately erected on the sixteen corners of the roof; these were minor and shorter structures. The central tower was topped by a jar of one maund pure gold. The gate was an impressive one; the *Torana* have two lions on both sides as *dwarapala*. The temple has ben damaged and desecrated.

Rajdhar Manikya (1785-1804 A.D.) constructed a temple in Vrindaban and dedicated it to Rashbihariji. An image of Rashbihari Sri krishna was made of eight metals for worship. Priests were appointed and land-grants were made at Bamutia, Tripura.

Similarly, Durga Mankiya (1809-1813 A.D.) too built a shrine in Varanasi and dedicated it to Siva. The temple is popularly known as Jora Siv mandir. The king might have decided to spend the last days of his life in Varanasi as a devotee of Siva. The temple complex has a two-storeyed

Dharmasala for the residence of the royal family and pilgrims. It may be added that Maharajkumar Sahadev Bikram-Kisor visited this temple complex in 1954 A.D.

The famous Uzir family in Agartala gave Tripura soldiers, ministers, historians, artists and freedom fighters. Durgamani Uzir (c. 1768-1836 A.D.) belonged to this family. The family had its house at old Agartala where a magnificent Siv mandir with a high tower was built by Durgamani[38]. The Siv mandir has its plain and tall tower tapering upward. It is more a shrine than a temple. It survives even to-day. It stands at a short distance westward from the Chaudda Devatar mandir.

In 1838 A.D. Krishna-kisor Mankiya (1830-1849 A.D.) decided to shift the capital westward; accordingly the capital was gradually shifted from the south bank to the north bank of the same river Haora. Here the king built a very small shrine and dedicated to Hanumanji. The Hanumanji mandir stands inside the palace on a wide courtyard. It is not a public temple. Ritual is held regularly. It is a plain and small shrine without any inscription.

Isanchandra Manikya (1849-1862 A.D.) built a temple in Vrindavan. It is located at Bhut galli; it is popularly known as Tripura Kunja. Isanchandra Manikya built a two-storyed palace at new Agartala. The disastrous earthquake of 12 June 1897 damaged the Unakothi *tirtha* and destroyed the palace of Isanchandra. The Martin company of Calcutta was engaged to build the present Ujjayanta Rajprasad. The Company started the work in 1899 during the reign of Radhakisor.

Isanchandra's brother Maharaja Birchandra Manikya (1862-1896 A.D.) perhaps did not build any temple, but he had been to Vrindavan in November-December 1882 A.D. He put on a costly shawal there while halting at the Tripura Kunja. Suddenly, a monkey swooped down, snatched the shawal, decamped and tore it into numerous pieces. With a philosophical calmness the king commented, 'do not chase the monkey; it has taught me a lesson : Vrindavan is not a place of material luxury; it is a place for renunciation'.

Radhakisor Manikya (1896-1909 A.D.) was habitually charitable, high-minded, moderate and temperate. Radhakisor built a few temples in new Agartala. The Mangal Candi mandir of Radhakisor is located inside the palace. The Hanuman mandir and the Mangal Candi mandir stand apart within the same palace compound. The Mangal Candi mandir is smaller than the Tripura-Sundari mandir and much bigger than the nearby Hanuman mandir. Architecturally, the Mangal Candi mandir distinctly differs from the Tripura Sundari mandir and the Hanuman mandir; the Mangal Candi mandir is west-facing; its circumambulatory is inside the shrine under the same roof, but outside the walled cella. Ritual is held regularly. It contains no inscription and decorative art. The construction of the Mangal Candi mandir was preceded by a dream revelation in which Maharani Tulshibati actually got a metallic Mangal Candi-Ghat. Birendrakisor invited Swami Kalananda, Swami Santaram and Mohanta Jagatbandhu Vidyabagish to worship Dasamahavidya.

The Ujjayanta Rajprasad dominates the city of new Agartala. This two-storeyed palace is south-facing with wide stairways and two large tanks in front. The tanks are surrounded by religious and secular buildings. In between the two tanks, avenues, artifical spring and water canal and gardens have been made to add to the beauty and dignity of the palace. The palace is the hub of new Agartala. The two tanks are known as Krishna Sagar (=the western tank) and the Radha Sagar (=the eastern tank).

The majestic Jagannath mandir built in 1906 A.D. by Radhakisor Manikya on the west bank of the pair of large tanks in new Agartala and in the south-west corner of the Ujjayanta Rajprasad, stands on a high, octagonal basement, with covered circumbulatory, octagonal cella, flat roof and nine decorative towers (=Nava-ratna). A railing on the roof encloses the flat open space; the railing runs along the border where the short towers emerge. The subsidiary, eight towers are very short & small, while the main central tower is very tall, recessed, ribbed, tapering upward and topped by Kalasha & finial. The external recesses contain mural art, but no sculptured image. Contrasting with the richly decorated external walls of the towers of the Konaraka temple and the Khajuraho temples, the Jagannath temple of new Agartala exhibits considerable restraint and dignity. The king allotted a big plot, and raised a wall around the entire plot and dug a tank behind the temple, but within the surrounding wall. Only recently (1976 A.D.) the temple has been officially

handed over to the Sri Chaitanya Gaudiya Matha founded by Prabhupada Bhakti Siddanta Saraswati Goswami Maharaj (1874-1937 A.D.); henceforth the temple complex has been considerably improved; many buildings & *gopuram* have been added. Two standing figures of *dvarapalas*, at the gate of the newly built nat mandir have been sculptured in high relief. The stories and incidents of the eventful life of Srikrishna and others were made motif of an art gallery to explain the glory of Srikrishna. There is an inscription above the lintel of the gate of the main temple to the effect that Tulasibati, the queen of Maharaja Radhakisor, dedicated the temple to Jagannatha.

The Annapurna mandir and the Nrisingha mandir built in new Agartala under the patronage of Maharaja Radhakisor Manikya, are, indeed, small shrines which lack magnificent building, spacious complex and prominent location.

Maharaj Birendrakisor Manikya (1909-1923 A.D.) was an accomplished artist. By diverting the course of the river Haora south-westward in 1916-1917 A.D., the king saved the town of new Agartala from the sufferings of flood; it facilitated the construction of many buildings in new Agartala. His queen Maharani Prabhabati Devi was a very pious lady.

The Durga mandir built by Birendrakisor Manikya enjoys spacious complex, decent building and prominent location. It is in front of the Ujjayanta Rajprasad, more

specifically on the south bank of the Krishna Sagar. It is neither a shrine nor a temple, but a *mandapa* without any image and daily worship. It is only occasionally but annually used during the Durga puja. The *mandapa* faces south; it has a very spacious *nat mandir* with tin-roof, supported by several thin pillars. It has no inscription.

The Lakshmi-Narayan mandir built by Birendrakisor Manikya enjoys spacious complex, massive building, prominent location and convenient communication. It is in front of the Ujjayanta Rajprasad, more specifically on the south bank of the Radha Sagar. The temple stands on a high and wide basement. It has wide stairways. The temple faces west. The circumambulatory is inside the structure. The roof is flat on which several towers have been superimposed.

The external wall below the front roof has recesses and ornamentation. The artists have taken flora and fauna for their motif. But considerable restraint has been shown while making the temple ornate. The internal wall is plain. The *bhoga-mandapa* has been separately constructed behind the temple, on the eastern side. There is no separate *nat mandir.* The *nat mandir* has been housed under the same roof of the main temple. The temple contains an inscription to the effect that it has been built by Birendrakisor Manikya and dedicated to Sri Vrindaban Candra. The official name of the temple is Sri Vrindaban Candra mandir, though it is popularly known as Lakshmi-Narayan badi. The temple remains busy with rites

and rituals. The bridal processions make it a point to visit the temple.

Maharani Prabhabati Devi (c.1890-1971 A.D.) had a passion for social service and temple-construction. She built several temples: Annapurna mandir at Sita-kunda; Dharmasala and Siva mandir, and Radha-Syamsundar mandir within one complex in new Agartala near the Maharaj-ganj bazar; one *nat mandir* in new Agartala on the east bank of the Radhasagar; and another *nat mandir* at Nalgaria, a few miles to the east of new Agartala. The Dharmasala and the Siva mandir were constructed in 1930 A.D. The Radha-Syamsundar mandir (alias Radhesyam mandir) was added to that big complex after about four decades, sometime in 1968-1969 A.D. The Siva mandir is more a shrine than a temple. It is a small and short structure on a high basement. Here the god is represented by his phallic sign.

The Radha-Syamsundar mandir had been built long ago within the Ujjayanta Rajprasad complex. Here certain ceremonies like Dola-yatra, Jhulan-yatra, Rash-purnima, dance, drama, etc. would have been organised by the ladies of the palace. As the old temple had become withered, Prabhabati Devi built a new one outside the palace but not far from the palace, within the Siv mandir complex, about one mile south-ward from the palace complex. Contrasting with the adjacent Siv mandir of this complex, the Radha-Syamsundar mandir is spacious and comfortable. The temple has flat roof; and the circumambulatory is inside

the temple, under the same roof. The builders put emphasis on comfort and horizontality.

Prabhabati Devi's sister Arundhuti Mahadevi built an impressive Siv mandir in Agartala at a place known as Assam Rifles Ground. It is a temple rather than a shrine. It stands on a low hillock. It has a raised basement, tall tower and inner *pradakshin path*. A lake stands here and beautifies two temples. On the west bank stands the Siv mandir, while on the east bank stands a Buddha mandir. Arundhuti Mahadevi breathed her last in March 1941 A.D.

Maharaj Bir Bikramkisor Manikya (1923-1947 A.D.) has a dynamic personality informed with mission and vision. His reign was deluged with war and freedom movements. He built three temples in new Agartala. Biramani Hazra was an employee of the government of Tripura; Khandal in southern part of Tripura was his place of posting. While digging a pond in Khandal an image of Siva-Sakti was found. Biramani brought it to new Agartala[39]. Maharaj Bir Bikram built a beautiful temple on the east bank of the Radha-sagar and to the south-east corner of the Ujjayanta Rajprasad to install the image of Siva-Sakti. The temple is popularly known as Uma-Maheswar mandir. The Uma-Maheswar mandir enjoys a spacious complex and a handsome location. In front of the temple stand short pillars for two seated animals, nandi & singha (=bull & lion). Four joint pillars on each side with lotus capital, supporting a rectangular flat slab on which the sedate animals ride, adorn the entrance of the temple. The temple stands on a

high basement to be reached by wide stairways. The temple consists of three parts, namely *nat mandapa, antarala* and *garbhagriha*; the *bhoga-mandapa* stands apart, behind the main structure, to the eastern side. The temple faces west and overlooks the Radha Sagar and the Ujjayanta Rajprasad.

In certain Nagar temples, the progressive towers appear like rising peaks of a mountain range moving gradually towards the highest pinnacle[40]. The array of diminishing towers carries the theme upward. Modelled upon the Nagara style, the Uma-Maheswar temple has three towers which look like rising peaks of a mountain. The tiers rise in diminising succession. The builders have shown considerable restraint and artistic sense in decorating the temple. The main tower is superimposed by two *kalashas*, a crescent moon and a *trisul*.

Immediately after the second world war, Maharaj Bir Bikram built a Buddha mandir in new Agartala. It is called Venuban Vihar[41]. The Venuban Vihar enjoys a spacious complex, excellent location and a beautiful building. It is more a temple than a shrine. The complex contains the main temple, garden, courtyard, trees, school, residential accommodation, pond and surrounding wall. The temple faces south and overlooks the Ujjayanta Rajprasad. The general impression conveyed by the Venuban Vihar is that, while it has been modelled upon the Buddha-Gaya temple, in the hands of the king and the local craftsmen, it has become a little different structure. The builders adopted

the Buddha-Gaya style and amended it to suit their own ideal.

At the main entrance there is a portico with a flat roof supported by pillars. The larger portion of the roof is flat with three levels of elevation. The open space on the roof has not been surrounded by railing. To support the roof there are several corbels in the shape of volute. The cella has been superimposed by a tower which has four faces and sharp edges. The tower curbes inward towards the top. The tower has horizontal ribbes at equal intervals. A ribbed and flattened amalaka rests on a square & solid slab. Above the amalaka there is a proportionately slender *Stupa*. The *Stupa* has a lotus with the petals turned downward. Above the lotus, there are three circular discs which diminish upward. The tower is topped by Dharma-Cakra. The four long chains and pendent bells falling from the spire, clasp the external walls of the tower. The chains have symbolic configuration : the luxuries and pleasures of life are like chains which are used by *Maya* (= illusion) to fasten the ordinary mortals. The provision for admission of light and air is sufficient. Rituals are held daily and festivals are organised annually.

Characteristics

An attempt may now be made to highlight some characteristics of the temple architecture of Tripura. The following exercise is something like churning; it is something like searching the soul of the Tripuri dynasty; it is an attempt at going beyond the matter and reaching the mind.

In India a Hindu temple has several synonyms, such as *deul*, *devalaya*, *thakur-badi*, *devata-badi* and *mandir*, etc. A temple is believed to be a dwelling house of the gods. In Tripura the two words, *badi* and *mandir*, are very popular. Accordingly, a Siva temple is usually called Siv-badi, a Durga temple is referred to as Durga-badi. But a Ram temple or a Krishna temple or a Buddha temple is usually called Ram mandir, Sri Krishna mandir and Buddha mandir.

Tripura is the name of an administrative province marked in the modern maps of India. It is a tiny and hilly province between Assam and Bengal. But its architecture has a wider extension. The Tripuri dynasty kept Hindu civilization vibrant in eastern India during the centuries of iconoclastic domination by the foreign hordes. The Tripuri dynasty's architectural productions lie scattered in modern Assam, Bangladesh, Orissa and Uttar Pradesh also.

The evolution of Tripura temple architecture is vitally connected with the older tradition of the Nagara style occurring in northern India. The Nagara style's regional variation in nearby Bengal and Orissa set the fashion to the Tripuri dynasty. The beginnings of Tripura temple architecture can be traced to the classical Indian style of art, architecture and iconography. The adoption of the classical Indian heritage has drawn Tripura out of her local and tribal outlook, and raised the temple architecture of Tripura to the status of the classical Indian tradition.

What has been produced in Tripura, is not a blue print

or a blind imitation of the Nagara style. The architects of Tripura have displayed considerable autonomy to add and alter the model to suit their ideals and atmosphere. For example, the tower has not been raised to an extraordinary height because of earthquake-propensity; the exterior wall has not been profusely carved to save the temples from the harmful growth of moss, creepers and plants on the walls, and the *bhoga-mandapa* has been separately built to keep the temple free from soot. Thus, the seed and the soil have blended into a creative synthesis. The offshoot has been acclamatized and naturalized.

The alien Mughals suddenly and violently got themselves superimposed in India and often pursued a policy which amounted to antagonism rather than acculturation with the ancient heritage of India. So their rapid eclipse was natural and necessary. Contrarily, the Tripuri chief did not suddenly and violently establish himself; he did not hurt the heart of India; he honoured the Hindu heritage and became its champion. So the Tripuri dynasty ruled honourably for several centuries.

In Tripura, as elsewhere, there is a correlation between art and society, betwen heritage and history[42]. In Tripura the semi-nomadic Tripuri community has turned itself into a ruling power of an empire. In the long and complicated process of state-formation in which various factors and forces had left contributions, Sanatan Hindu Dharma also played a significant part. To ignore the role of Hindu ideology in the state formation process would be to render

much of the period's history unintelligible. It helped acculturation, peaceful coexistence, sanskritisation and state formation. A semi-nomadic community of subsistence economy became equipped with a government and a state. It is quite natural that accultured by Hindu Sanatan Dharma, the Tripuri dynsty has given a local expression to Hindu ideals as laid down in the *Veda*, the *Upanishada*, the *Ramanaya* and the *Mahabharata*. Evidently, the temples of Tripura are the manifestations of that correlation between society and art.

Scholarship in recent time has turned the early history of Tripura as mythological[43] and worthless[44]. But step by step the history of Tripura can be driven back into the legendary past. If any year is to be chosen to go back to its past, then the year 642 A.D. may be taken up as the starting point. In January 642 A.D. the Tipperah Chief, Adi Dharmapha, had organised in Sylhet a big *yagna* (= sacrifice) which was officiated by five Brahmanas of Mithila.It marked and accelerated the process of acculturation, sanskritization and state-formation. For about thirteen hundred years (642-1948) the Tripuri dynasty continued to produce images and temples.

The architectural activities of the Tripuri dynasty can be divided into three phases. The first phase centres round Kailash-har and Unakothi hill when numerous rock-cut images were carved in the Unakothi hill. The second phase centres round Rangamati (=Udaypur) when several tanks were dug and many temples were built. The third phase

centres round Agartala. The second phase was marked by bustle and hurry of war; accordingly the temples of this middle phase have masculine strength. The third phase was largely peaceful; so its temples have feminine beauty. The second phase had excitement of war and effort to defend the motherland, while the third phase had ease of peace, and effort to reform the administration. The tone of the two phases was not identical. The temple architecture of the two phases reflects the character of those phases. The architecture reflects the changing character in the temper of the Tripuri court.

The temple building activities of Tripura did not remain confined to one place. It began in the north, Kailas-har and Unakothi. It spread southward and westward. It spread over a wide area. In Chittagong, Noakhali, Comilla, Brahmanbaria, and in Orissa and Uttar Pradesh there are remains and ruins of temples built by the kings of Tripura. The advances made by Tripura in temple architecture are considerable; it moved from bower to tower, from bamboos to bricks. In this pilgrimage, the styles got changed but the theme remained fixed.

Of all the chieftainships and kingships which go together to make the history of Tripura, none had a more remarkable contribution on the temple architecture than the Tripuri dynasty. What the Pallavas did for the Deccan, the Solankis did for Gujarat, the Medicis did for Italy, the Tripuri dynasty did for Tripura. The Tripuri dynasty proved its dexterity in resisting aggression on the one hand, and

producing tanks & temples on the other.

The builders of Tripura temples paid adequate attention to the natural factors and forces. Geologically, Tripura is very young in age. Hard rocks and massive stones are not available here. This deltaic region has alluvium, clay, sand, water, lime, heavy rainfall and luxuriant growth of plants. These materials were largely utilised. Burnt bricks, hardened and purified by fire, were made here thin, big and square in size (12"x12"x1"). The firewood of the Tamarind tree was highly preferred for the burning of bricks.

Heavy solidity constitutes an important feature of the Tripura temples. The temples built by Dhanya Manikya are remarkable for this feature. Heavy solidity has enabled the temple to withstand the depredations and neglect of hundreds of years. The principle of permanence and stability was given priority.

Horizontality is yet another notable feature. Like the Hoysala style (1050-1300 A.D.), the Tripuri style put more emphasis on horizontal expansion, than on vertical erection. Whereas the heavy and horizontal structure of the Tripura-Sundari temple (1501 A.D.) remains even to-day, the high towered Vishnu temple alias Jagannath temple (1661 A.D.) disastrously collapsed in an earthquake.

The Hoysala temple-structure stands on a high and spacious platform. In Tripura some temples stand on hillocks and high platform. The Tripura-Sundari temple, the Bhubaneswari temple, the temples at Sita-kunda, the

Vishnu temple of Ramdev Manikya, the Chandra Gopinath temple of Uday Manikya, the Jagannath temple of Radhadkisor, the Lakshmi-Narayan temple of Birendrakisor Manikya have this particular feature. But this feature has not been uniformly carried on. There are a few exceptions, like the Tripures Bhairav temple and the Chaudda Devatar mandir at old Agartala in which the basement is very low.

The hemispherical ceiling is another distinctive aspect. This aspect is prominent in the Udaypur group of temples. The Cella of these temples looks like a big bowl turned downward. But viewed from another angle, it looks like a circular, hollow and simple crown of the deity, because the image has been installed just below this crown.

The *pradakshin path* in the Udaypur group of temples is outside the shrine. The circumambulatory is open and runs around the square cella. The inner chamber and the circumambulatory stand uniformly on the same level of platform. But in Agartala some temples have their circumambulatory under the same roof. The Manipuri group of temples have this feature in particular.

The Udaypur group of temples have their walls articulated by pilasters. A pilaster differs from a pillar in design. A pillar is usually a tall, upright, visible column. A pilaster is also tall, upright column, but partly built into and partly projecting from a wall. Moreover, the Udaypur pilasters are tapering upward. In each such temples there are at least four pilasters strongly supporting the roof.

The Udaypur group of temples have been provided with sloping roofs of *char-chala*. Brick and mortar occupied the place of two-thatch and bamboo huts. The rectangular shaped, two-thatch has been replaced by the square shaped four-thatch. The two types differ in another respect also. The straight edege of two-thatch has uniform slanting, looking like a parallel line to the ground; the oblique edge of the *char-chala* pucca temples of Udaypur lacks uniform slanting, looking like a big arch.

A very significant aspect of the Tripura temples is the plain and simple treatment of the exterior and interior walls. The unadorned walls of the Tripura temples stand in sharp contrast with the exterior walls of the temples of Orissa and Deccan where the dualism of mundane life has been carved in sharp relief. The builders of Tripura have shown restraint in avoiding it and thereby in giving no scope for superficial criticism.

In a superficial assessment, the cella may appear to be dim, fetid, stuffy and suffocating. But unless we view Indian temple with an Indian eye, we are likely to debase it. Dr. Stella Kramrisch has a befitting reply to the modern assessemnt. Kramrisch says, "The dark innermost sanctuary of the temple has, as a rule, one door and no windows. It is called the garbha griha, the 'womb house'. This womb-chamber is enclosed and surmounted by the mountain of the temple. Therein the worshipper beholds the image and is reborn to a new life"[45].

Most of the temples contain a brief written record in the shape of an inscription. The inscriptions were written in Sanskrit and in Bengali script. These inscriptions are important landmarks in the history of Tripura. These historical inscriptions contain decorative language with a rich wealth of imagery about the personality of the king.

The congregating of a number of temples on one site is not uncommon in India. The temples belonging to different denominations within Hinduism stand together peacefully. The Khajuraho group of temples exhibit this cosmopolitan and synthetic approach.

Tripura is not lagging behind in this noble approach. The genius of statesman within the Tripuri dynasty expressed itself in the grand and cosmopolitan scheme of the Chaudda Devata (=fourteen deities) and earnestly made them the *kooladevata* (= family deity). The synthetic approach has been carried further with a concrete shape at places like Unakothi, Sitakunda, Udaypur and Agartala. In reply to a question of the Dvarabangadhipa, what Radhakisor Manikya had explained, summed up the whole philosopy. The gist of the explanation is that 'as kings, the Tripuri dynasty is simultaneously Sakta, Saiva, Ganapatya, Vaishnava, but as individuals we are Vaishnava[46]. The Dvarabangadhipa became astonished and pleased.

For centuries certain *Puranic* stories have been carried even to many remote corners and countries. The story of Daksha Yagna, and Siva-Sati, the story of Rama-Lakshmana-Sita, and Rama-Ravana, the story of *Samudra manthana*,

the story of Radha-Krishna, and Kurukshetra war, the story of Kali & Mahadeva, the story of Jagannath-Balaram-Subhadra have been the motif for artists, painters and scupltors in different parts of India and abroad. No wonder, these classical themes have been sculptured in Tripura also.

A survey of the temples of Tripura, unquestionably proves that most of the temples were built by the kings out of the royal treasury. Did they not violate the norms of public administration ? Did they not mix religion with politics ? Let us take the help of Radhakrishnan (1888-1975 A.D.) to reply the questions. Radhakrishnan concludes, "Hinduism has no sympathy with the view that 'to mix religion and business is to spoil two good things'. We ought not to banish spiritual values from life."[47] Moreover, what Shah Jahan (1628-1658 A.D.) did at Agra, and Aurangzeb (1658-1707 A.D.) did at Aurangabad over their wife's tomb at the cost of the royal treasury, was not followed by the kings of Tripura. The Tripura kings abstained from that. Not only that, armed with the model of secularism, has the modern public administration been able to purge itself from criminilization of politics and politicization of crime ? Are the secular leaders not spending crores of rupees from the public treasurey for competitive populism ?

In Tripura, as elsewhere in India, the temples have a philosophy to ponder; a symbolism to visualize. *Prakriti* contains three aspects, namely-creation, preservation and destruction. These three eternal and universal aspects have been synbolized by Sanatan Dharma; Brahma, Vishnu and

Maheswar have been projected as symbols of those aspects. Most of the Indian temples popularise this or that or all the three aspects of nature. The secular aspects of *Prakriti* have been given a religious covering. It is an attempt at crystallization of what has been going on around us. This philosophy deals with the entire world as a whole and tries to lift us from sensuous to non-sensuous thought. Here a meditative mind mingles with the magnificent monument.

In every culture there is a core or configuration. It grows out of collective consciousness. Some gifted individuals crystallize and modernise it. Every human society everywhere holds a distinct trait. Ruth Benedict summarises, 'each from the point of view of another ignores fundamentals and exploits irrelevancies. One culture hardly recognizes monetary values; another has made them fundamental in every field of behaviour"[48]. Almost the same type of remark had been made long ago by Sri Krishna in the *Bhagavad-Gita* (ch.2, sloka 69).

Idealism is the distinct trait of Indian culture & civilization. The ideal of Indian life is to realise the infinite, that is, to go beyond the obvious & material world, or visible nature, to the reality behind. In all Indian religion and philosophy, from the Vedic days onwards, Indian thought has been struggling to realise the infinite. The efforts of the human mind to grasp the inner meaning of the external facts of nature fill the pages of the Upanishads[49].

Man is a whole. If life is one, then there is one master

science of life which recognizes the four supreme ends : *dharma*, *artha*, *kama* & *moksha*. Inspired with these ideals, the ancient Indians evolved concrete modes of expression through the *Veda*, the *Upanishada*, the epics and through art and architecture. Disciplined mind, not athletic physical body, is the model of Indian art & architecture.

So the same intensity of devotion, the same search for cosmic consciousness, the same idealism of *Yoga*, the same longing for *chaturbarga*, which are discernible in the art & architecture of Banaras & Barabudur, and of Kanyakumari & Kamakshya, have inspired the Tripuri dynasty to take to tank & temple construction. The indomitable soldier in Dhanya Manikya fought in the Meghna valley against the mortal and finite Sultan of Bengal, and the *sadhak* in Dhanya Manikya surredered to the feet of Tripura-Sundari & Bhairava and Trimurti -the symbols of infinity. At that time construction of tanks & temples was undertaken with enthusiasm by the kings, and learning of *Darsan* & *Smriti* was cultivated with eagerness by the Brahmanas.

But these splendid works of architecture in Tripura, as elsewhere, could not withstand the fury of the iconoclasts, the more so because there was so much of gold in them. Travellers to-day can still imagine the earnest devotion of the Tripuri dynasty & solemn calmness of the temples. Radhakisor Manikya and Bir Bikramkisor Manikya had solicitude for these ruined edifices.

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CHAPTER -X

Management of public temples in Tripura

Management of public temples in Tripura

In Tripura there are many public and private temples. Some public temples are managed by the government as a condition of Tripura's merger with Bharat. The priests of these public temples have been facing a few man-made troubles. What follows is a comparative study in the management of two very prominent places of public worship, namely- the Tripuresvari temple of Udaypur and the Chaudda-devata temple at Puratan Agartala.

Sri Sri Mata Tripura-Sundari Mandir

The official name of the temple is Sri Sri Mata Tripura-Sundari Mandir. It has a few synonyms, such as Tripuresvari temple, *Matar badi*, *Matabadi*, *Mayerbadi*, *Kali mandir*. It is located at a place about 35 miles to the south of Agartala; it is in Udaypur. As one of the premier towns of Tripura, Udaypur possesses many sculptural spendours of medieval Tripura. The temple is in southern Tripura; it stands on a low hill. It has been built in 1423 *Sakabda* (= 1501 A.D.) by Maharaj Dhanya Manikya (1490-1515 A.D.)[1]. Here Sorashi Kali Ambika is worshipped. Before the construction of the temple, a small image would be worshipped in the open space.

Mythology & legend

In the most ancient past, the king of Kailasha was Daksha. Sati and Siva were his daughter and son-in-low respectively. Once the king performed a great sacrifice (=*yagna*) in which Sati and Siva were not invited. Sati, however, went there without invitatioin. Unfortunately, defamatory discussions about Siva by the assembled guests wounded Sati's feelings. So she committed suicide. Siva came to know it. He became furious and immediately went there. He took the corpse on his shoulder, made frantic dance and roamed about. To save the world from massacre, Vishnu's Sudarshan Cakra cut the corpse into 51 pieces. Those pieces had collapsed to grounds, where grew up 51 sacred shrines. The right leg of Sati fell in Tripura[2]. It fell on a low hill. The hill is called Kurma pitha. So the shrine existed

long before the construction of the temple.

The deity of the temple is called Sorashi Kali (=sixteen years old Kali). The icon is made of black stone (=kastik pathar). She is in standing position and facing towards west. Siva is absent. Another small image called *Chotama* stands to her right side. Siva resides in another temple, about 2 miles to the north; this temple, located near the motor-stand and market, is called Sivbadi. This temple too has a significant legend :

Tripur was the name of an ancient king of Tripura. He was outrageous. The oppressed subjects appealed to Siva. Siva killed Tripur. The next king Trilochan was very virtuous. The temple of Siva (=Tripures Bhairav) was first built where Tripur had been killed in Tribeg. Subsequently Tripura's capital was shifted from Tribeg to Rangamati (=Udaypur), and along with that, the Sivalinga too was shifted. Maharaj Dhanya Manikya built in Udaypur the temple of Tripures Bhairav.

Historical background : Tripura has been an ancient Hindu kingdom. Its king adorned its capital with tanks and temples. For more than 500 years (1240 to 1765 A.D.) the Afghans, the Pathans, the Mughals, the Moghs and the Portuguese buccaneers attacked, invaded, ravaged and plundered this kindgom. All these atrocities affected the kings & kingdom, the subjects & temples.

The king Dhanya Manikya first decided to install the image of Vishnu in the newly constructed temple (1501 A.D.)[1]. The change of decision, because of dream revealation, seems to have a military significance. At that time, attacks on Tripura were rampant; so installation of

the image of a Sakta deity was in conformity with the material mood of the moment.

For 450 years (1501-1949) the kings of Tripura took care to maintain the temple. The credit of building the temple, bringing the idol from Chittagong, installing the image, bringing two sets of priests from Kanauj and appointing them here, appointing two sets of local attendants for menial services goes to Maharaj Dhanya Manikya. To ensure the regular supply of essential elements of daily worship and necessary services, the king made an arrangement which is known as *Khatooni Minah*[4]. According to that system, priests, attendants, sweepers, drummers and suppliers were given rent-free lands. They would continue to occupy and utilise those lands so long as they continue to render services to the temple.

After Dhanya Manikya, 41 kings ruled Tripura. All of them, out of deep respect and high recognition, patronised the temple. The main temple is an old architecture, and the rest are later additions. The temple is square at the base, tapering upward and four-roofed. Its height is 75 feet; wall is 8 feet thick; inside is 16 ft. x 16 ft.; outside is 24 ft. x 24 ft.[5]. A big tank called Kalyan Sagar to the adjacent eastern side of the temple dug by Maharaj Kalyan Manikya (1626-1660 A.D.), has numerous big fishes and old tortoises who come very close to the pilgrims to receive food. Another tank was dug to the adjacent northern side of the temple by Ranagan Narayan who was brother-in-law and army-chief of Uday Manikya (1567-1572). A very big natural lake called Sukh Sagar to the north-

western side of the temple added to the beauty of the temple. This lake was the naval station of Tripura and a place for pleasure trip by boats.

Repair and renovation of the temple were done by several kings; but we have got the names of only four kings who renovated the temple; Kalyan Manikya rebuilt the spire destroyed by the Moghs; Ram Manikya (1673-1685) in 1603 S.E, Durga Manikya's (1806-1813) queen Sumitra Devi in 1779 S.E.[6] and Radhakisor Manikya (1896-1909) in 1826 S.E. repaired the temple.

The other side of the temple's historical background is miserable. The time of troubles of Tripura was from 1240 to 1765. Some of those atrocities are noted here in brief. Wars between Dhanya Manikya and Hussain Shah, Vijay Manikya and the Afghans, Uday Manikya and Sulaiman Karrani, Amar Manikya and Sikandar Shah, Amar Manikya and Moghs of Arakan, Yasodhar Manikya and Jahangir, Kalyan Manikya and the Mughals, Ratna Manikya and Murad Beg, Dharma Manikya and Mir Habib, Mukunda Manikya and Hazi Munsam, Indra Manikya and Alivardi Khan, Vijay Manikya and Alivardi, Krishna Manikya and Samser Gazi took place in and around Udaypur which is the seat of the temple. In all these battles, only Dhanya (1490-1515) and Vijay (1532-1563) were successful. Almost all the remaining kings were defeated, captured, exiled, compelled to pay heavy taxes and dethroned. The sorrows and sufferings of the kings, queens, princes and subjects knew no bounds. Udaypur was ransacked and left like a

desert by the Mughals and the Moghs & the Afghans. They desecrated several temples and robed off all ornaments from the temples. Obviously, the Tripura-Sundari temple too was severely affected by the invaders. The Mughals stopped the daily worship of the Tripura-Sundari and other temples. A fortuitous event of epidemic cholera compelled the infidels to retire to Meherkul. Defeated and chased by Samser Gazi, Krishna Manikya, like Ram, lived in *Vanavasa* for 12 years (1748-1760) and left Udaypur for Agartala. Not only that, recurrent raids of Udaypur from the east by the predatory Kukis and the Lushais compelled the priests and attendants to shift their families westward and on 2.3.1197(=1787A.D.) they were given lands at Saldha near Comilla. The change of capital from Udaypur to Agartala affected the management of the Tripura-Sundari and several other temples of Udaypur. During the next period from 1765 to 1949 , the temple remained undisturbed. In 1949, this and certain other temples have been handed over to the government of India by the last king of Tripura. Thus, the temple passed through several vicissitudes of history.

Daily schedule of worship from Vaisakh to Asvin :

Sl. No.	Time	Types of work
1.	4 A.M.	Opening the temple & *mangal arati*
2.	5 A.M.	*Balya bhog*
3.	8 A.M.	Temple is closed for bathing and dressing the Divine Mother

4.	10.30 A.M.	Temple is opened, worship begins
5.	12 Noon	Sacrifice of animals & birds starts.
6.	12.30 P.M.	*Anjali*; offerings by devotees
7.	1.30	*Anna bhog*, offerings of rice to the Mother
8.	2-2.30 P.M.	Temple is closed and the Mother retires
9.	2.30 P.M.	Opening of the temple, distribution of rice
10.	7 P.M.	*Sandhya arati*, evening prayer
11.	9.30	*Sital bhog*
12.	10 P.M.	Temple is closed for the night & the Mother sleeps

The timings are approximate and there may be little changes during the period from *Kartik* to *Chaitra* and due to unforeseen reasons. Besides, *Amabashya* in every month, the first day of *Vaisakh*, *Mahalaya* and *Maha-ashtami* in *Aswin* and Dipavali in *Kartiki Amabashya* are special occasions when the above schedule is disturbed a little. The above schedule indicates that the priestly functions are numerous. The priest is to wake the deity with music, bathe, dress, anoint, make offerings, please with songs & dance & hymns and to look after Her rest & sleep.

Ingredients of daily worship:-

Sl. No	Item	Quantity	Price
1.	Ginger & green chilli		Rs. 2.00
2.	Brinjal	500 gram	Rs. 3.00
3.	Chilli	25 gram	Rs. 1.10
4.	*Darchini*		Rs. 1.50
5.	*Dhania*		Rs. 1.50
6.	Fruits		Rs. 7.00
7.	Goat	1 to 5 kg	Rs. 198.50
8.	*Ghee*	50 gr.	Rs. 6.00
9.	*Haridra* (Turmaric)	25 gr.	Rs. 0.70
10.	*Jira* (Cumin seed)	25 gr	Rs. 1.10
11.	*Kala* (Banana)	10	Rs. 3.00
12.	*Kumda* (Pumpkin)	1	Rs. 10.00
13.	Mustard oil	300 gram	Rs. 7.20
14.	*Mula* (Radish)	3	Rs. 3.00
15.	*Maida*	100 gram	Rs. 0.60
16.	Milk	400 gram	Rs. 4.00
17.	*Peda*	50 gram	Rs. 3.00
18.	Potato	500 gram	Rs. 3.00

19.	*Panch Poran*		Rs. 1.00
20.	Rice	2.75 kg	Rs. 22.50
21.	*Sim* (Bean)	500 gram	Rs. 5.00
22.	Sugar	100 gram	Rs. 1.20
23.	*Suji*	50 gram	Rs. 0.60
24.	Salt, etc.		Rs. 2.00
		Total	Rs. 287.00

There may be seasonal variation in the supply of fruits and vegetables, and annual variation in the price of the ingredients. As such, this list is approximate. The above price list is of 1989 A.D. On the occasion of every *Amabashya* one buffalo is required for sacrifice.

Priestly order

By the term 'priestly order' we mean to include all types of workers directly connected with the temple. Maharaj Dhanya Manikya was judicious enough to engage two sets of priests, attendants, drummers, and sweepers, etc. lest any one set becomes impure or unable to work owing to birth, disease or death. The Brahmanas were brought from Kanauj, while the other workers were appointed from the nearby villages. Another very important aspect is that there was neither the system of paying daily/monthly salary to these workers & priests, and nor the system of purchasing the necessary ingredients in cash. Instead, they were given lands to be used so long as they would continue to serve the temple. The following list contains the names of posts

held by the priests and attendants; it has not been arranged according to protocol :

Sl. No.	Post	English version	Duty
1.	Purohit	Priest	Worshipping
2.	Tahasildar	Manager	Office management
3.	Talua	Attendant	Preparing oblation
4.	Pachak	Cook	Cooking
5.	Dhooli	Drummer	Drum beating
6.	Jharudar	Sweeper	Sweeping
7.	Daftari	Peon	Going on errands
8.	Prahari	Night guard	Guarding
9.	Bazar Sarkar	Purchaser	Purchasing things
10.	Jolai	Torch bearer	Fagot burning in *Amabashya* night for buffalo sacrifice

During the princely period, there were other categories of workers too. They were suppliers of firewood, banana leaves, banana, he-goat, buffalo, rope, broom, flowers, ladder, groceries, and the like. Each of them was given land. They were Hindus belonging to any of the four *varnas*.

Finance

The management of this temple requires a substantial amount of money. Formerly, the kings used to bear the expenses. Since 15.10.1949 the government of India and later the government of Tripura has been bearing the expenses. So there are two distinct periods in this regard.

Maharaj Dhanya Manikya did not leave anything to ambiguity and uncertainty. He made elaborate arrangement to ensure proper worship. Instead of giving in cash, he gave in kind. In those days, lands were amply available here; but there was scarcity of cash money. So the king gave lands to each type of priests, attendants, suppliers and workers on the condition that they would continue to enjoy the lands so long as they would serve the temple. But many of them have later stopped serving the temple; they are unscrupulously continuing to enjoy the lands or disposed the lands. Some were converted to Islam; they have managed to exchange such lands with the lands of some Hindus of East Pakistan and left Tripura. The Tripura Land Revenue and Land Records Act (1960) has been another blow from the sky. Armed with the Act, the government has abolised intermediary right and paid a nominal amount of compensation. Here too, the governmental action seems to be lacking in uniformity. In South Chandrapur also there are even to-day (1993 A.D.) 10.45 acres of such lands enjoyed by 12 Muslim families and 14 Hindu families. It is not that all the royal decrees were in writing, some of them were oral. Some lands were orally given as *khatooni minaha*. Later, when land has become very scarce and progeny have become unwilling to serve, they have stealthily remained away from the temple and by questionable means got the mutation of those lands. Even after so much of loss, the revision settlement of 1981 found 168 acres of such land. Out of

this huge landed property, under the Matarbari Tahasil alone there are 10.45 acres in South Chandrapur; 10.10 acres in North Chandrapur, and 17.84 acres in and around the temple. It comes to 38.39 acres. What is surprising, even out of 238.39 acres, hardly one acre is under the actual possession of the temple. Sri Gopal Chandra Bhadra (b.1919-) was chairman of the Advisory committee from 28.10.1988 to 6.4.1993. Sri Bhadra honestly & sincerely took pains to collect the details of these *khatooni minaha* lands. No body else but Sri Bhadra did this splendid task. But his labor went in vain.

After the accession of Tripura, the government of India and later the government of Tripura have inherited the management of this temple and certain other temples which were maintained by the Tripura kings. The government of India and the government of Tripura have been maintaining these temples through the District Magistrate and Collector; a section called Places of Public Worship (P P W) has been opened inside the office of the D.M. The government has been paying the expenses for daily and occassional worship of the temple. The system of paying derisory honorarium to the priests and attendants was uncertain till 1981. The Tripura Dev-devarchan Karmacari Samiti put pressure upon the government and got partial redress. Thus since 1982 some of the workers of the temple are getting a revised rate of honorarium. Besides, the government has been supplying through a contractor the necessary ingredients for the worship of the deity.

To meet the expenses for worship and development of the temple complex and welfare of the workers, the District Magistrate & Collector of the Tripura South District in the capacity of *sevayet* of the temple made an appeal on 14.10.1990 to the public for donations. The response from the people has been hopeful, and donations have been coming. An account has been opened with the S.B.I., Udaypur branch where such donations are being deposited.

Moreover, a notice has been served for general information to the effect that since 10.10.1990, if anybody wants to observe certain ceremony here, the rates of *dakshina* would be as follows:-

1. Marriage anniversary	Rs.	101.00
2. Birth-day anniversary	Rs.	51.00
3. Inauguration of new bus/truck	Rs.	51.00
4. Inauguration of new taxi/jeep	Rs.	25.00
5. Registration of marriage	Rs.	25.00
6. Investiture with the holy thread	Rs.	21.00
7. Inauguration of scooter	Rs.	11.00
8. Sacrifice of buffalo	Rs.	11.00
9. Donation of gold/silver	Rs.	5.00
10. Worship of any old vehicle	Rs.	5.00
11. First food feeding	Rs.	5.00
12. Donation of clothe	Rs.	3.00
13. Sacrfice of he-goat	Rs.	3.00
14. Sacrifice of duck/pigeon	Rs.	1.00

Management

The essential task of management has been to facilitate co-operation and co-ordination among the priests and attendants on the one hand, and to work as mediator between the temple and the government on the other.

So long as (1748 A.D.) the capital of Tripura was in Udaypur, the task of management was rather easy. Of course, during the time of troubles owing to raid, ravage and external attacks, management faced crisis.

Even as early as in 1904, the problem of management of all the public temples and religious endowments of Tripura arose and drew the attention of Maharaj Radhakisor. So, on 29.5.1314 T.E. (=1904 A.D.) Gopikrishna Uzir was appointed to look after the management of all the public temples[7]. He was to be assisted by Dewan Babu Banga Chandra Bhattacarya. On 19.11.1314 T.E. (=1905 A.D.) Vaikunthanath Vachaspati was appointed to look after the management of the Rashbihari kunja in Vrindavan[8]. Nevertheless, during the later princely period, Dasnami Sadhus were in charge of the management of the Tripura-Sundari temple. It is difficult to ascertain the time of their first engagement. They belonged to two orders, namely Giri and Saraswati. Here too alternative arrangement was made by the kings. The holy names of some of those saints are: Ramanada Saraswati,Dayananda Saraswati, Madhav Giri, Kesav Giri, Balak Giri. Balak Giri was the last Mohanta. He was engaged in 1326 T.E. (=1916 A.D.) and he died in 1342 TE (1932 A.D.) The ascetics were followed by some

householders. Harendra Chakrabarti (1888-1965 A.D.) was the first householder to adorn the chair of the manager of this temple. Harendra Chakrabarti's successor was Radhikaranjan Dev Varman. After that, one manager of the rank of *Tahasildar* is being appointed.

Even then, the above arrangement has been found insufficient in view of the increasing pilgrims particularly during the Dipavali in the month of *Kartik* (October-November). So, since the early 1960s a special and temporary committee is being constituted every year. The committee consists of officials and non-officials. The non-officials are often selected on political consideration.

But what is worse is the harassment and oppression by some atheists and anti- social elements. The heads of sacrificed he-goats would be distributed free of cost. In course of time, the number of seekers increased, and getting the heads became their right. The priests and attendants were abused and assaulted several times. This and other problems like water supply, electricity, repair and encroachment led to the formation of an advisory committee in 1982. In the formation of the advisory committee also political consideration plays a part.

It appears that the management of the Tripuresvari temple has been passing through a number of phases and periods. At the earliest phase, during the period of Maharaj Dhanya Manikya, the Brahmanas of Kanauj played the dual role of managers and priests. Next, the work of management and worship was bifurcated. Management

has been passed on to the secular authorities, leaving the work of worship to the priests and their assistants. Thus the management has become contractual, impersonal, secular, institutional and to some extent political. The land grant of 2.3.1197 T.E. noted the names of Jaykumar Chakrabarti and others as *sevayet* but now the DM is the only legal *sevayet*. Thus a family-kinship-lineage based *sevayet* system has come under the control of an administrator and politicians.

Pilgrims

All the old informants are of the opinion that the number of pilgrims has remarkably increased during the last 50 years. The number of pilgrims to this temple may be nearly 500 persons a day. Their number increases during holidays, *Amabashya*, Saturday, Tuesday, the first day of *Vaisakh* and the like. But the largest arrival recurs during the fortnight-long Dipavali when nearly one lakh pilgrims visit the temple every day. If the number of pilgrims is taken into consideration , the Tripura-Sundari temple tops the list of temples in Tripura. This is because this temple is one of the 51 Sakta pithas, and at the same time improvement in the means of roads and transport has taken place.

The pilgrims come from different parts and provinces of Bharat and even abroad. Among the Hindus, all castes and communities visit it. There are Saktas, Saivas, Sikhs, Buddhists, Jainas, & Vaishnavas. The Vanavasi Hindus from the hills frequently visit it.

The visitors cover a wide spectrum of population and professions. Among them there are administrators, advocates, beggars, barbers, businessmen, carpenters, cobblers, clerks, cooks, domestic servants, doctors, engineers, factory workers, farmers, grocers, housewives, journalists, landlords,motor drivers, money lenders, policemen, potters, politicians, priests, rickshaw-pullers, research scholars, saints, students, teachers of schools, colleges and university, unemployed youths.

The motives of visit to this temple are various, such as to gain *punya*, to secure an employment, to have peace of mind, to be successful in examination, to win in election, to win in legal suit, for cure of disease, for promotion, safe journey, welfare of children, to fulfil a vow, to be successful in love, to secure a mate, for marriage of sons and daughters, for safey of vehicles, for domestic ceremonies like first-food-feeding, and initiation to the sacred thread, marriage and funeral purification. The businessmen particularly come on the first day of *Vaisakh*, place the new account books at the feet of the goddess, and seek her blessings. The owners of vehicles and drivers of motor vehicles come here, worship the Divine Mother and seek Her blessings. To solve their personal problems most of the pilgrims seek the goddess to intercede on their behalf in return for which they pledge something.

Services rendered by the temple

This foremost temple has been rendering economic, social, religious, psychological and political services to the country

and countrymen. The beneficiaries belong to various castes & classes. Some of the services rendered by the temple are enumerated below :

1. **Defence of Tripura :** Wars between Maharaj Dhanya Manikya and Hussain Shah are historically admitted facts. The Maharaja was suffering from worries and anxieties. Material war was reflected in psychological war in the shape of dream. The dream revealation by the goddess to install one Sakta deity, instead of a Vaishnava deity may be interpreted as a mental preparation to meet the challenge. And it is well-known that Dhanya Mahikya's army successfully defended the country. Why ? In contrast to Saktaism, Vaishnavism seems to reflect an adaptation in which endurance & withdrawal is a strategem, whereas fighting involves the risk of defeat & destruction.
2. **Human settlement :** Long ago Tripura had a handful of population. Density of population was 9 per square mile in 1874-75; so we can easily guess the density in 1501. Establishment of this temple in 1501 A.D. had attracted a good number of artisans, priests and other workers who settled in the locality.
3. **Reclamation and cultivation :** The Maharaja gave lands to the priests and their attendents. The lands were fertile, but uncultivated. The grantees made arrangements for the reclamation and cultivation of those lands. Thus agricultural productions were increased

4. **Business complex :** The temple served as a nucleus around which a business centre and market have grown up to cater to the needs of the villagers, pilgrims and tourists. There are some shops producing and selling unique dry sweet cakes called *peda*.
5. **Cheap ceremony:** This temple serves as a venue for simplified performance of such rites and rituals as *annaprasana*, *vivaha* (marriage) and *upanayan* (initiation to sacred thread).
6. **Inter-caste marriage:** Traditionally unorthodox and unapproved marriages are approved, solemnised and registered here and solemnised by the priests.
7. **Employment :** Catering to the needs of the temple and the pilgrims and the tourists, a good number of persons are making their livelihood. The temple is a good employment provider.
8. **Spread of literacy:** Long ago, the mohantas belonging to the order of Giri and Saraswati, used to run a Sanskrit *Tol* and teach Sanskrit, philosophy, Sastras etc. This very *Tol* was shifted to the adjacent temple land in 1952 and renamed as Matarbari Primary School. It is now a Senior Basic School.
9. **Cure of disease:** There is an old proverb, 'depend on god, but keep your powder dry'. The patients who come here, combine *puja* with modern medical treatment; the drivers combine *puja* with technical training. Besides, some old priests had versatile

genius. Even to-day, Sri Vijay Chakrabarti knows a lot of Ayurvedic medicines and has cured several difficult cases.

10. **Solution of domestic problems:** The problem of maladjustment between mother-in-law and daughter-in-law, husband and wife, inter-caste love affairs often come to the knowledge of the temple priests. These priests are here for more than 500 yrs.; they try to give good advice with their knowledge of the Sanatan Sastra. Their advice is often obeyed, because the priests are held in high esteem by the public.

11. **National integration :** This temple is managed by the Hindus belonging to four *varnas*. The pilgrims are drawn from many language groups and various provinces of Bharat. Besides, Saktas, Saivas, Vaishnavas, Jainas visit this temple. It generates an intergrative feelings. Inter-caste marriages solemnised by the temple bring the castes close to each other. Inter-dining narrows down the gap. The caste rigidity is remarkably absent here.

12. **Tourism:** Tourism is nowadays recognised as an important industry. The government is trying to attract tourists. The tourists come here not to see the secretariat, but to see the relics of the ancient Indian art and architecture. This temple is highlighted by the department of tourism. Travellers and students can imagine the heyday of the Tripuri empire which left its stamp in the form tanks and temples.

13. **Solace in sorrow:** A visit to this bowery temple and even a short stay here in solitude give relief in affliction. Gopal Das has lost his mother; owing to the premature death of the lady, Gopal's father Sri Bimal Das has become overwhelmed with sorrow. The unfortunate husband has been reading the *Srimat Bhagabat Gita* for the last 15 years. Such actual examples can be multiplied only to show that the temple continues to console the afflicted souls.

14. **Rectification of habit:** Sri Prantosh Kar had a flourishing business. Then he took to drinking wine and used to squander time, money & energy. Soon he became ruined. He touched the feet of the deity and stopped drinking. Now as a photographer in the temple, he ekes out his livelihood. His brother Santosh Kar, by looking after the swans, rabbits, he-goats, etc. gets pleasure; he gets a meal, and has no other ambition. One old lady, popularly known as Masima has come here from a different society; she looks after the flower garden, gets a meal; she gets peace of mind. These are all recent and actual examples to prove that the temple provides a space of leafy bower where one can get peace of mind. It is an island of peace surrounded by a sea of selfishness, bickerings and hypocrisy.

Changes

The temple is more than five hundred years old. During these five centuries, so many changes have taken place in

the country. The temple is the silent spectator of many ups and downs of history. The wave of changes all over the country has touched and affected the temple. There have occurred both quantitative and qualitative changes in the temple . Some of the significant changes are noted below:

1. The famous chronicle of Tripura, *Sri Rajmala* admits that besides animals and birds, human beings too would be occasionally sacrificed in the Sakta temples. Long ago the practice of human sacrifice had been restricted by Maharaj Dhanya Manikya and completely banned by some of his successors. But the most cruel practice of animal sacrifice still continues in the name of religion. This is an example of anachronism.
2. The region to the south-east of the temple was under deep forest infested with wild animals like elephant, tiger, bear, jackal and swine; the depredations of these animals upon the temple made the priests disgusted. The sacrifical animals would be snatched away by tigers. Subsequently, the depredation of the quadruped has been replaced by that of the biped.
3. Formerly the people in large number used to celebrate the Sanipuja in the temple complex particularly during the months of *Vaisakh* and *Jaisthya* when jackfruits and mangoes were abundantly available for offerings. Such a celebration is hardly seen now.
4. Formerly, the people often used to offer large quantity of milk for ablution of the deity. This too is rarely seen now.

5. The two lineages descended from Gadadhar Pande and Dhananjay Pande alternately perform the *puja*. The present generations of priests belong to the 19th , 20th and 21st descending generations from Dhananjay and Gadadhar. The right over the worship and donations rotates in a cycle among them. But the number of persons belonging to each lineage has considerbly increased. A family of priest may be lucky to have its *pala* on an auspicious day. No family can solely rely on the earnings of the temple. The financial condition of some priests and attendants is really precarious. So many of them have taken to small business, white collar jobs, motor driving and the like. The turn for service is called *pala* it is sometimes sold or leased out by the owners. The Talua inside the temple belongs to two separate non-Brahmana lineages, namely De and Neogi. Both of them sell *pala* on the basis of half share.
6. It is significant to point out that while the aged priests and attendants are quite respectful to the Divine Mother Kali of this temple, and very proud of their long association with the temple, the younger generation of priests and attendants is gradually losing emotional attachment and interest in the temple services. The recent trend is turning them from temple to temporal matters and pleaures.
7. The TLR & LR Act (1960) has deprived the priests of the lands granted by the Maharajas. Formerly, they

were managers of the property of the Tripura-Sundari as well as priests. Formerly, they used to get *dakshina*, *pranami*, and at the same time income from the lands. The Act has reduced about 50 % of their income.

8. Besides the priests, some attendants have been serving the temple for generations, while some others have already ceased serving the temple. Among these defaulters there are both Hindus and converted Muslims. These defaulters should have returned the lands to the temple. But they did not. Some converted Muslim defaulters have sold out those lands or exchanged and crossed the borders; some are continuing to enjoy without rendering any service.

9. The amity between the two lineages of priests who were brought in 1501 A.D. from Kanauj, continued for a long time. But in course of time, in the early 20th century clash of interest, first took the shape of ill feeling and then litigation. At last at the end of 1351 TE (=1941) a compromise was worked out and it became effective right from 1941. It has been continuing even to-day.

10. What was lacking in the distant past is the wide publicity of the temple. Modern science and technology have been put to this service. Photographs and prints of the temple and the Tripura-Sundari are now easily available. It is a common thing to find photograph of the Tripura-Sundari hanging at the front window screen of motor vehicles, jeep, taxi, shops and houses. Some local schools, shops, markets, villages, post office, police

outposts and tahasil office and so on are named after the temple. Publication of books and pamphlets has also contributed to the publicity of this temple.

11. Formerly, the Vanavasi Hindu communities like the Tripuri, Riang, Jamatia, Noatia, Halam, etc. constituted the major portion of the pilgrims. The historic riot of June 1980 between the hills people and the plains people has brought about a scism of the soul. After that, visit of the hills people has been remarkably reduced.

12. In every *amabashya* night, one buffalo is being sacrificed. The task of sacrificing (=cutting) the animal was being performed for centuries by the Galim of the Chaudda Devata-badi. The temple of fourteen gods had been in Udaypur and it was shifted to Puratan Agartala in 1760. Even from Puratan Agartala. the Galim used to come here and sacrifice the buffalo. It continued from 1501 to 1979. Since the unfortunate riot of 1980, the Galim has stopped coming here. Now the sacrifice is done by this temple's Talua.

13. The management system of the temple has undergone profound change. During the princely period, the Brahmanas were the managers of the *Devottar* and *Brahmottar* property, as well as priests. The Dasnami Mohantas were customarily the supervisors and managers of the ecclesiastical matters. After the handing over of the the kingdom and the temple by the Tripura king to the governement of India in 1949, the lineage-

based management has been replaced by the legally framed and nominated bodies. The familial management has been put under a secular, institutional , impersonal system.

14. Introduction of the system of paying revised honorarium to certain attendants and workers of the temple since 1982 has been a noble feature. But some more attendants are to be brought under the scheme. The scheme needs revision in terms of scope and amount.

15. Encroachment is a major problem to the temple complex. The sacred zone now (1989) contains dispensaries, garages, groceries, hotels, markets, restaurants, rest house, residential houses, saloons, stationery shops, shops of flowers and sweets, school, tea stall, tahasil office, etc. No priest and attendant reside inside this sacred zone. Repeated requests and reminders to vacate the sacred zone seem to be ineffective.

16. This famous and foremost temple seems to be a gaudy facade. An erosion of authority and faith have devoured the sacred atmosphere of the temple.

Administrative response

The temple is full of problems. These problems are related to the *Devottar* and *Brahmottar* property, *Khatooni Minah* property, honorarium of the attendants, accomodation of the priests and attendants, training of the priests, safety of valuable ornaments and donations, and so on.

The administration is aware of some of these problems. And it has done a lot to solve certain problems. Maharaj Dhanya Manikya and Govinda Manikya attempted to ban human and animal sacrifice. Kalyan Manikya and Ranagan Narayan arranged to dig tanks for water. After 1949, the government of Bharat and of Tripura provided electicity, police guard and drinking water, appointed a manager, revised monthly honorarium for some attendants, constituted an advisory committee and *mela* committee, made an appeal to the generous public for donations, opened bank account and served notice to the shop-owners for evacuation, purchased a plot of land for the shifting of the encroachers, constructed two rest houses, prepared a master plan and obtained the report of the Commission. To the Left Front government goes the credit of purchasing a plot and revising honorarium. It may be recollected that during the chairmanship of Sri Gopal Chandra Bhadra (28.10.1988 to 6.4.1993) certain major works like construction of dining hall, rest house, stair and bathing ghat, renovation of water supply, electricity supply and road; preparation of a master plan, etc. were done. After the untimely death of his wife on 28.7.1991, he look it with earnest devotion and dedication. Sri Bhadra went to Agartala several times and to New Delhi twice at his own cost to materialize the master plan. But alas! no one was serious; however, he remembers with regard the sincerity of some officers.

Concluding remarks

It is a good gesture on the part of the administration to set up a Commission and to prepare a master plan. But as

the Commission's report and the plan have not yet been made public, it is difficult to comment on the plans and programmes. Under the circumstances, a few suggestions can be humbly made. These are noted below :

1. All the encroachers are to be shifted beyond the sacred zone(Kurmapitha) and settled at the south-western corner where a plot has been purchased for this very purpose.
2. One surrounding wall has been started; it leaves the illegal shops outside it between PWD road and the wall; it further shrinks the sacred zone. This seems to be unwise. There is a realistic proverb : Give an inch, and he will take an ell. This is a general reflection on human character. A thick and high wall has to be constructed covering the entire Kurmapitha; this has to be done only after giving settlement to the encroachers. The wall has to be erected at the extreme periphery leaving reasonable space for expansion of road.
3. At present the priests and attendants are suffering from lack of resting place. A long barrack has to be constructed inside and near the peripheral wall. The barrack should have apartment and attached latrine, water and electricity.
4. A small branch of the State Bank of India has to be opened inside and near the perepheral wall. The present arrangement of keeping donations and

ornaments does not seem to be safe. The bank will serve not only the temple, but also the entire locality.

5. A small police outpost has to be set up inside and near the peripheral wall. It should have civic amenities like attached sanitary latrine, bathroom, water, electricity.
6. A small post office has to be opened inside and near the peripheral wall. It should have civic amenities for the staff.
7. A small library has be opened inside and near the peripheral wall. It should have civic amenities. One room of the library has to be set apart for one Sanskrit *Tol*. Most of the priests lack in even an elementary knowledge of the Sanatan Sashtra.
8. The Tripura-Sundari Matarbadi is the richest temple in Tripura. It is the richest beggar living on alms from government and public. It has 168 acres of land. The lion's share of this vast land is called *Khatooni Minah*. But the persons holding the *Khatooni Minah* are no longer serving the land. As such they have no right to hold on the land. A reasonable price of these lands has to be realized and kept in fixed deposit. It can be made self- dependent.
9. While certain provinces have already enacted the Hindu Religious Endowments and Institutions Act, Tripura is lagging behind. The necessity of such an Act needs no explanation.
10. Absence of a beautiful flower garden inside the sacred

zone is a drawback. Here and there such trees are found in the complex. But it does not serve any psychological purpose. From a planned garden, pilgrims may get peace of mind, solace in sorrow, divine pleasure and realize the subtle difference between material pleasure and spiritual pleasure. Living amidst delusion, despair and disputes, the common householders sometimes become mentally sick and thirsty for a touch of heavenly bliss.

11. The Talua inside the temple and the Bajandar (=drummer) do not get honorarium. They depend on uncertain tips. They deserve honorarium not as a matter of alms, but as right. How is it that the Talua who sacrifices an animal or bird gets nothing as a matter of right, but the priest sometimes takes more than the prescribed *dakshina* !
12. Selection of suppliers and nomination of members of the advisory committee are done on political consideration. It is not a healthy tradition. An attempt may be made to reduce the number of politically minded people, and to include the representatives of local ashrams.
13. The schedule of programme of the temple's daily and annual activities emphasises the rites and rituals of religion. It puts emphasis on the externals. Where ethics and mortality are subordinated to external rituals, quality of public life cannot improve. The daily

or weekly programme must, therefore, include a philosophical discourse on the Sanatan Dharma.

Chronology of events of Tripura-Sundari Temple :

1501 A.D.	Construction of the temple by Dhanya Manikya.
1618 A.D.	Mughals captured Udaypur and stopped the worship of the temple.
1660 A.D.	Dwija Ratna Narayan was given 20 drone lands at Chandrapur.
1679 A.D.	Renovation by Ramdev Manikya
1748 A.D.	Samser Gazi captured Udaypur, Krishna Manikya in exile.
1787 A.D.	Land grants to Sivsundar Pande at Saldha, Comilla due to Kuki raid at Udaypur
1857 A.D.	Renovation by Sumitra Devi, queen of Durga Manikya.
1904 A.D.	Renovation by Radhakisor
1941 A.D.	Settlement of disputes between two gotras of Purohits.
1949 A.D.	Temple handed over to the government of India.
1960 A.D.	Tripura Land Revenue and Land Record Act
1982 A.D.	Formation of Advisory Committee; revision of honorarium.
1988 A.D.	Reconstitution of the Advisory Committee (28.10.1988)

1989 A.D. Appointment of one-man Commission; report of the Commission; Eviction notice served.

1990 A.D. Appeal from the Sevayet to the public for donations; fixation of *dakshina* on various occasions.

1991 A.D. Construction of Dining hall and rest house; master plan; renovation of electricity and water supply; construction of stair.

1992 A.D. Eviction notice served again

Genealogy of Priests

Sl.No.	Sandilya Gotra	Sl. No.	Vatsaba Gotra
1.	Dhananjay Pande	1.	Gadadhar Pande
2.	Lakshmi Narayan	2.	
3.		3.	
4.		4.	
5.		5.	
6.		6.	
7.		7.	
8.		8.	
9.		9.	
10.	Dvijaratna	10.	
11.	Kabikankan	11.	
12.	Brajaraman	12.	
13.	Vishnuram	13.	Pitambar
14.	Ramkesav	14.	Kartik
15.	Ramkanta	15.	Radha Kanta

16.	Kasinath	16.	Padmalocan
17.	Dvarika	17.	Isan
18.	Upen, Raj, Suren,	18.	Jaykumar, Krishna Jogen Kumar
19.	Bakul, Arun, Balai, Santi, Sakti, Sivu, Sambhu, Sankar, Ashim, Asish, Gopal, Nepal, Dulal, Samir	19.	Vijay,Vinay, Prafulla, Parimal
20.	Khokan, etc. Jiban etc.	20.	Ajay, Sanjay, Narayan
21.	Pankaj	21.	Rupam

List of Mohanta & Manager

Mohantas	Managers
Ramananda Sarasvati	Harendra Chakrabarti
Dayananda Sarasvati	Radhikaranjan Dev Barman
Mathurananda Mohanta	Aswini Kumar Devnath
Madhav Giri	Sukhendu Chaudhuri
Kesav Giri	Kamakshya Prasad Chakrabarti
Balak Giri	Bijan Majumdar
	Aswini Kumar Devnath

Sri Sri Chaudda Devata Badi

The official name of the temple is Sri Sri Chaudda Devata Badi. It is the temple of fourteen deities. It has no synonym. It is located at a place about 5 miles to the east of new Agartala. It is situated at Puratan Agartala. As one of the capitals of the Tripuri Kshatriya dynasty, Puratan Agartala possesses a few sculptural spendours. This temple

stands on the flat and low valley of the Haora river. The present temple is a later addition. The ancient temple was built by Maharaj Dhanya Manikya (1490-1515 A.D.) at Udaypur. The present temple has been built by Maharaj Krishna Manikya. The names of the deities worshipped here are : Hara, Uma, Hari, Ma, Bani, Kumar, Ganapa, Bidhi, Ksha Abdhi, Ganga, Sikhi, Kama, Himadri[9]. Besides, another deity called Bura Devata is also worshipped in a small shrine. These deities are jointly called Chaudda Devata; their synonym is *Kula Devata* which means family deity or tutelary deity of the Tripuri royal dynasty.

Mythology and legend

Tripura is an ancient Hindu Kingdom. It has been ruled by an ancient dynasty. This illustrious dynasty had a notorious prince named Tripur[10]. He was addicted to all sorts of vices, and indifferent to the welfare of the subjects. So the life of the subjects became miserable. They earnestly prayed to Mahadeva. Mahadeva killed Tripur. The successor of Tripur was Trilocan. Trilocan was a blessed one and virtuous. Mahadeva advised Trilocan to introduce the worship of 14 deities together. Trilocan followed the advice[11].

Historical background

Tripura has a long history. The medieval period was very stormy to Tripura. For more than 500 years (1240 to 1765 A.D.) the Afghans, the Pathans, the Mughals, the Moghs and the Portuguese buccaneers attacked, invaded, ravaged and plundered Tripura. All these atrocities affected the

kings & the kingdom, the subjects and the temples.

Maharaja Dhanya Manikya (1490-1515 A.D.) faced the invasion of Hussain Shah of Bengal, and felt the necessity of socio-religious consolidation in the internal front to strengthen the external front. The royal arrangement for the worship of all the major cults of Hinduism together in a single temple is a part of that grand design.

Unfortunately, the exact year of the construction of the temple by Dhanya Manikya is not known. What is certain is that Dhanya Manikya built the temple and started worshipping the 14 deities. All the subsequent kings for more than four centuries took care to maintain the temple. Maharaj Kalyan Manikya (1626-1660 A.D.) made golden images of the 14 deities. Kalyan Manikya built (1572 S.E.) a temple for Chandra Gopinath. By that time, the old temple built by Dhanya Manikya became delapidated. So the 14 deities were installed in the new temple, though meant for Chandra Gopinath.

In 1748 A.D. Samser Gazi attacked Tripura and captured Udaypur. Samser's widespread house in Dakshin Sik is strategically surrounded by a trench, circular, deep, wide and full of water. Krishna Manikya (1748-1783 A.D.) was thus compelled to live in exile. Krishna Manikya's severe sufferings came to an end after the fall of Samser. But Krishna Manikya did not return to Udaypur; he shifted the capital northward at old Agartala. The images of the 14 deities were installed in a new temple at old Agartala in 1760; so since 1760 A.D. the temple at old Agartala remains

the seat of the Chaudda Devata.

Daily schedule of worship

Sl. No.	Time	Types of Worship
1.	9 A.M.	Opening the temple, *Mangal arti*
2.	9.15 A.M.	*Balya bhogh*
3.	10 A.M.	Sacrifice of animal, bird
4.	12 Noon	*Anna bhog*
5.	12.30 P.M.	Temple is closed, rest & sleep of the deities
6.	7 P.M.	Temple is opened for evening prayer
7.	7.30 P.M.	Temple is closed.

The timings are approximate and there may be little changes due to unforeseen reasons and special occasions like *Kharci*, *Ker*, *Amabashya*, etc.

Ingredients of worship

Sl. No.	Item	Quantity
1.	*Ada*	250 gram for 5 days
2.	*Booter Dal*	14 kg. for one month
3.	Country liquor	250 gram for 5 days
4.	*Dhania*	200 gram per month
5.	*Dhoop*	400 gram per month
6.	*Dim*	3 per day
7.	Dry Chilli	1 kg. 600 gram per month
8.	Firewood	Rs. 3.00 per day

9.	*Ghee*	1 kg. per month
10.	Green *halood*	400 gram for 5 days
11.	He-goat	1 per day
12.	*Jira*	200 gram per month
13.	*Khasa* rice	2 kg. per day
14.	*Khoraki* rice	14 kg. for 5 days
15.	Mustard oil	10 ltr. 500 gram per month
16.	Milk	750 gram per day
17.	*Moog Dal*	14 kg. per month
18.	*Piyanj*	1 kg. 600 gram per month
19.	*Pan*	1 *challi* for 5 days
20.	*Supari*	100 gram for 5 days
21.	*Samai kala*	16 per day
22.	Sugar	8 kg. per month
23.	*Sandes*	14 per day
24.	Salt	3 kg. per month

The above list of allotment has been prepared by us; it has been collected from the memory of the temple priests. There is no list in the temple. It is regretted that certain items are quite insufficient; while certain items like fruits and vegetables are absent. As such the allotment is perhaps insufficient and incomplete. Not only that, the items are supplied by either Tripura State Co-operative Consumers' Federation Ltd., Agartala or by a private grocer. But the priests are required to walk down a long distance for

collecting those ingredients. Every month, they are to go to Agartala for a number of times for collection. Moreover, the quantity and quality of the ingredients supplied by the private supplier may not be up to the mark. For vegetables the priests depend on purchase from personal fund or from *dakshina*.

Priestly order : By the term 'priestly order' we mean to include all types of workers directly connected with the temples. The kings were judicious enough to make elaborate arrangements for the worship of the gods. The priests were brought from the distant Sagar dvipa in Sundarban and the nearby villages. It is not known whether initially they were given lands or monthly honorarium. The Sagardvipi Brahamanas got mixed up with the local people and lost their identity. The following list contains the names of posts held by the priests and attendants; it has not been arranged strictly according to protocol :

Sl.No.	Post	English version	Remarks
1.	Chantai	Chief priest	Remains in the complex
2.	Khapang toinai	Vice Chief	Comes during Kharci
3.	Purohit	Brahmana	Comes daily
4.	Narayan	Assistant	One resides in the complex
5.	Barifang	Cook	Two reside in the complex
6.	Yakcu	Helper	Two reside in the complex
7.	Galim	Sacrificer	Two reside in the complex

8.	Talua	Sweeps the sanctum	One resides in the complex
9.	Padrai	Swordman	Comes during Kharci
10.	Sutradar	Throne cleaner	Comes during Kharci
11.	Banik	Image checker	Comes during Kharci
12.	Acarya	Image checker	Comes during Kharci
13.	Mali	Sweeper	Comes daily
14.	Binandia	Guard	Resides in the complex
15.	Riskak	Flag holder	Comes during Kharci

The priests and attendants are all males. They are not required to observe celibacy for the whole life. But while living in the temple, they must observe celibacy. It implies that everbody in the above order has his family, wife, children, house and property away from the temple complex. They casually and occasionally leave the temple and live with the members of their families. In certain categories of assistants, there are several persons. For example, there are four *Narayans*, eight *Barifangs*, eight *Yakcus* and seventy *Galims*. All of them do not reside here at a time. They stay here according to their turn (=*Pala*). But all must be present during the annual festival called *Kharci Puja* during the rainy season.

Finance

The management of this temple requires a substantial amount of money. Formerly, the kings used to bear the expenses. Since 15.10.1949 the government has been bearing the expenses. So there are two distinct periods in this regard.

Right from the beginning, the kings regarded and treated this particular temple as their *Kula Devata mandir*. So they did not make separate financial arrangement for this temple. This is why no land grant was made for this temple. Instead, the kings used to pay the daily expenses directly from the royal treasury. Definitely, there were periods of chaos, confusion and crisis during the time of troubles (1240-1765 A.D.). But the system continued unaltered during the princely period.

After the merger of Tripura, the government of India and later the government of Tripura have inherited the management of this and certain other temples. The government has been maintaining and financing this temple through the District Magistrate; a section called Places of Public Worship (P P W) has been opened inside the office of the D.M., Agartala, Tripura West. The system of paying honorarium to the priests and attendants was there since the princely period and amount was nominal till 1981. The Tripura Dev-Devarchan Karmacari Samiti put pressure upon the government and got partial redress. Thus since 1982 the chief priest and some attendants of this temple are getting honorarium at a revised rate. Besides, the government has been supplying through a contractor

and the Tripura State Co-operative Consumers' Federation Ltd., H.G. Basak Road, Agartala, most of the items of ingredients for worship.

Management

So long as (1748 A.D.) the capital of Tripura was in Udaypur, the task of management of this temple was rather easy. The princes and the priests were next door neighbours. During the time of troubles from 1240 to 1765 A.D., management of the temple faced crisis. After the shifting of capital from Udaypur to old Agartala in 1760 A.D., a new temple was constructed at old Agartala and in course of time the worship started formally. The capital was again shifted to new Agartala; the site for new Agartala was selected in 1838 A.D.; from 1844 offices were gradually shifted to new Agartala. It took time to completely shift all the establishments. Approximately from 1860, new Agartala became fullfledged capital. So again from 1760 to 1860 the temple was under the direct supervision and management of the kings. The shifting of capital to new Agartala has again affected the management of the temple. As the gods of this temple are regarded and respected as *Kul Devata* (=tutelary gods) of the ruling house, neither a manager nor an advisory committee was engaged during the long princely period. However, in 1904 Maharaj Radhakisor appointed Gopikrishna Uzir to look after the management of all the public temples. It is not known whether the Chaudda Devata mandir was under the jurisdiction of Gopikrishna.

After the merger of Tripura with Bharat, the government of India & later the government of Tripura has been in the management. On behalf of the government, the District Magistrate of Tripura West is the official *sevayet* of the temple. The P.P.W. section inside the office of the D.M., is in actual management of the temple. The P.P.W. section authorises one grocer of Kasari Patti, Agartala and the Tripura State Co-operative Consumers' Federation to supply necessary ingredients.

During the weeklong Karchi Puja in the month of *Ashad*, a *mela* committee is constituted. It consists of different departmental heads and local leaders.

Management of the Chaudda Devata mandir is in disarray. It is in transitional state. The process of bifurcation has not been complete. In the Tripura-Sundari temple one Tahasildar looks after the management and acts like a middleman between the temple and the administration. But in the Chaudda Devata mandir, such an officer has not been appointed; here the chief priest plays the double role; he acts as priest and at the same time as manager. Even then, he is put to trouble because of delay in supplying the ingredients, expenses and honorarium.

Pilgrims

All the old informants are of the opinion that the number of pilgrims has remarkably increased during the last 50 years. The number of pilgrims to this temple may be nearly 75 persons a day. Their number increases during holidays, *Amabashya*, Saturday, Tuesday, the first day of *Vaisakh*, *Sukla*

Astami and *Sukla Navami* and the like. But the largest arrival is during the weeklong festival called *Kharci* in the month of *Ashad* (=July) when nearly one lakh pilgrims visit the temple every day. Improvement in the means of communication and transport has led to this increase.

The pilgrims come from different parts and provinces of Bharat. Among the Hindus, all castes and communities visit it. There are Saktas, Saivas, Sikhs, Buddhists, Jainas & Vaishnavas. The Vanavasi Hindus from the hills frequently visit this temple.

The visitors cover a wide spectrum of population and professions. Among them there are administrators, advocates, beggars, barbers, businessmen, carpenters, cobblers, clerks, cooks, domestic servants, doctors, engineers, factory workers, farmers, grocers, housewives, journalists, landlords, motor drivers, money lenders, policemen, potters, politicians, priests, painters, rickshaw-pullers, research scholars, saints, students, teachers of schools, colleges and university, unemployed youths, etc.

The motives of visit to this temple are various, such as to gain *Punya*, to secure an employment, to have peace of mind, to be successful in examination, to win in election, to win in legal suit, for cure of disease, for promotion, safe journey and welfare of children, to fulfill a vow, to be successful in love, to secure a mate, for marriage of sons and daughters, for safety of vehicles and the like. Most of the pilgrims seek divine intercession to solve their personal, temporal and worldly problems.

Services rendered by the temple

This famous temple has been rendering various services to the country and countrymen. The beneficiaries belong to several castes, classes and categories. Some of the services are pointed out here :

1. Socio-religious integration : This temple's philosophy is to integrate various types of *upasana* like Sakta, Saiva, Vaishnava, Ganapatya, animism, totemism, etc. It embraces all the sectarian ways of worship in Hinduism. It is a visible manifestation of the message of the Srimat Bhagavat Gita : All rivers originating from various sources run zigzag or straight but reach one ocean. It practically demonstrates the perfect harmony among different sects. The grand synthetic approach is a proof of statesmanship.
2. National integration : The temple is open to all castes, creeds and communities. It is a common meeting place of the hills people and the plains people.
3. Business complex : The temple serves as a nucleus around which a business centre and a market have grown up.
4. Employment : Catering to the needs of the temple, and of the pilgrims and the tourists, a good number of perosons are making their livelihood.
5. The temple provides temporary shelter to the distressed people. During the riot of 1980, many people stayed here. Pratap Pal was physically

handicapped; he stayed here many years and died here at the age of 64 on 11.9.1993; the temple paid for his funeral expenses. Indramonan Devnath is a blind bard; he is residing here since June 1993.

6. History of Tripura : The most famous chronicle of Tripura is *Sri Rajmala*. Maharaj Dharma Manikya (1431-1462 A.D.) commissioned the compilation of this book of Tripura history. Two Brahmanas namely Sukresvar and Banesvar wrote the first volume. But it was the chief priest of this temple who narrated the early history. His name was Durlavendra Chantai. The early medieval history of Tripura was in the vivid memory of Durlavendra. Had there been no such temple, and no such priest, it would be difficult to collect relevant materials of that important period. Durlavendra had a towering personality. After three hundred years, Jayanta Chantai contributed to the writing of *Krishnamala*.

Changes

The old temple of the 14 deities at Udaypur is a very ancient shrine which has been desecrated and deserted. The present temple at Puratan Agartala has been built in 1760. The system of worship of the 14 deities has undergone profound changes during the last 500 years. Some cardinal changes are noted below :

1. *Sri Rajmala* admits that besides animals and birds, human beings too would be occasionally sacrificed in this temple. A particular community known as Maichli

was engaged for the collection of spotless boys[12]. Long ago the practice of human sacrifice has been restricted by Maharaj Dhanya Manikya[13] and completely banned by some of his successors. But the most cruel practice of animal sacrifice still continues in the name of religion. It seems to be an anachronism.

2. The system of worship of the 14 gods was perhaps in its inchoate form prior to Dhanya Manikya. It was Maharaj Dhanya Manikya who institutionalised the worship.
3. Both Udaypur and Puratan Agartala witnessed the depredations of wild animals. Even at new Agartala wild elephants used to come as late as in 1950. The sacrificial animals would be snatched away by tigers. Unfortunately, the depredation of the quadruped has now been replaced by that of the biped.
4. What was lacking in the distant past is the wide publicity of the temple. Modern science and technology have been put to this service. Photographs and prints of the temple and the 14 deities are now easily available. It is a common thing to find photograph of Chaudda Devata hanging at the front window screen of motor vehicles, jeep, taxi, shops and houses.
5. The priests of this temple used to go to Udaypur and sacrifice buffalo in the Tripura-Sundari temple in every *Amabashya* night. It continued from 1501 to 1979.

Since the unfortunate riot of 1980, the priests have stopped going to the Tripura-Sundari temple.

6. So long as (1748) the temple was in Udaypur, the chief priest used to play a vital role in the palace politics. He had a voice in case of any dispute regarding succession, appointment, punishment and so on. After 1760, his voice lost importance, such cases were henceforth referred to the British courts.
7. The priests had marital relations with the princes, nobles and army officers. Maharaj Dhanya Manikya's son was Dev Manikya. Maharaj Dev Manikya's queen was the daughter of the chief priest. Such type of familial relations ceased to exist after 1760 A.D.
8. The shifting of capital from Puratan Agartala to New Agartala by the middle of the 19th century has left the temple in trouble. The temple was deprived of princely presence. At last in 1949, the princely patronage too was officially withdrawn and the temple has been handed over to the government of India and of Tripura.
9. Formerly, management of the temple was the sacred duty of the dynasty. Since 1949, management has become commercial, contractual, formal, secular and impersonal.
10. The *Ker Puja* is a major part of this temple's rites and rituals. The *Ker Puja* is observed after 14 days of the *Kharci Puja*. It had splendid grandeur and solemn

gravity during the princely period. The grandeur has been remarkably reduced now. We may draw a parallel between Ker and Apollo. To Apollo all pollution was an offence, & hence birth & death were forbidden at Delos; all sick persons & pregnant ladies would be shifted; and games celebrated. Thus, the Greeks & the Romans sought a divine protection[14]. Almost similar ritual has been continuing in Tripura for a divine protection.

11. The Puratan Agartala temple complex faces the unintentional problem of silent encroachment. The temple complex had an area of 3.88 acres (=9 kanis, 14 gandas). This sacred zone now contains club, dispensary, garage, grocery, market, party office, residential houses, saloon, tea stall, confectionary also. While admitting the absence of any evil design behind the trespass it has to be added that it makes the beautification of the complex difficult. Their evacuation and resettlement elsewhere, may be followed by a beautification programme. A modern garden from the temple to the palace may be made. Similarly both natural and human agencies have destroyed the nearest palace.

Administrative response

The temple is full of problems. These problems are related to the *Devottar* lands, honorarium of the priestly order, accommodation of pilgrims, supply of the essential ingedients and so on.

The administration seems to be aware of some problems. The rudimentary form of worship was largely regularised by Maharaj Dhanya Manikya. Dhanya Manikya and Govinda Manikya attempted to ban human and animal sacrifice. Kalyan Manikya built a temple. Krishna Manikya shifted the gods and built a new temple in 1760 A.D. at Puratan Agartala, and arranged to dig a big tank in front of the temple. The present main temple at Puratan Agartala is an old architecture, and the rest are recent additions. After 1949, the goverment has provided electricity, made a small tank of water, renovated rest house and the temple, and revised monthly honorarium for the chief priest and a few attendants, and filled up the adjacent marshy land located at the south-east corner of the temple. A showroom for the display of the 14 deities during the *Kharci Puja* has been built in 1975-1976. An enquiry Commission was constituted first in 1904, and next in 1989. One *ghat* (=bathing place) has been renovated in 1992-1993. One *Mela* committee is constituted every year to look after the annual festival called the *Kharci Puja*. But the problems of encroachment, and misuse of the holy water of the tank, remains unsolved.

Concluding remarks

The members of the priestly order are in distress. Being disgustful of the management of the temple, the chief priest remarks "It is better to remain on fast for five days in my villa, than to suffer humiliation and mismanagement connected with the Chaudda Devata badi". The Chandi-

pathak laments "I pray to the gods for not getting the post of the priest of this temple in the next life". These words of lamentation are alarming. Still they are working with patience, but one day they may become impatient and disobedient. It is high time to pay attention to their grievances. Here some of their demands and suggestions are noted below :

1. All the encroachers are to evacuate the temple complex.
2. One surrounding wall has to be made covering the entire sacred zone.
3. Police outpost has to be set up inside and near the peripheral wall, preferably near the gate. It should contain civic amenities.
4. A revision of the list of ingredients for the daily worship has to be made.
5. The supply of ingredients of the daily worship is insufficient, irregular, troublesome and embarassing. This has to be rectified.
6. The system of paying honorarium has to be revised in scope and quantity. The regular employees of the government are getting benefits of revision and increment; but in this temple the priests are deprived of those benefits.
7. The tank in front of the temple is put to various uses by the villagers, such as bathing, washing, fishery and duckery. Its water has become so much polluted that

it cannot be used for the temple. The government has surprisingly leased it out to some fishermen's co-operative society. All these have to be stopped, and the tank should be brought within the proposed wall.

8. The rest house and the guest house of the temple are very poor, nasty and worn-out. These may be made pucca with attached bath-room and latrine. The old plan of dormitory may be dropped; and instead, apartments may be built.
9. One library and one *Sanskrit tol* are to be built. The quality of priestly work has been sharply deteriorating; this has to be checked.
10. The post of manager may be created to look after the problems and prospects of the temple, and to work as the middleman between the temple and the administration. In other words, the chief priest may be assigned this task.
11. The temple has failed to improve the quality of public life, because of its emphasis on the external aspects of religion like offerings, sacrifices, donations; the programme may, therefore, include a philosophical discourse on ethics, morality, duty and character.
12. The old palace at Puratan Agartala has not yet been completely damaged. The roof has been totally damaged, but the vertical walls have solidity and strength even to-day. The palace can be repaired and utilised as a museum and library.

To conclude, like temple architecture, temple management has passed through certain phases. When the capital of Tripura was at Udaypur, management was partly feudal and partly familial. The Tripura-Sundari temple was autonomous in administration and feudal in service. The Chaudda Devata temple was under the direct management of the royal family. Management of other temples was mostly like that of the Tripura-Sundari temple.

When the capital was shifted to Agartala, the trend of management also underwent a remarkable change. The feudal pattern was abandoned. A separate branch was opened. It was called *Dev-Devarchan Vibhag*. The annual budget would make provision for allotment of money for that department. The kings were cautious to appoint faithtful & honest people for this department. The third phase began after 1948. The management was in the hands of the Central government during period from 15.10.1919 to 20.01.1972. Since 21 January 1972 the State government has been looking after the temples.

The elaborate & expensive task of making the two temple complexes graceful has been done: the Chaudda Devata temple in 2008-09; the Tripureswari temple in 2009-10. It must be put on record that thousands of citizens admire Sri Swapan Saha (16.11.1951-), the respected District Magistrate, IAS of the 1995 batch, for the repair & reconstructio of several community halls. This dynamic & efficient officer had never fallen bound hand & foot to bureaucratic complicacies & politcal mercies in undertaking such works.

CHAPTER-XI

Intercommunity relations in Tripura

Intercommunity relations in Tripura

The intercommunity relations in Tripura, as elsewhere, exemplify varying trends of co-operation & conflict, associative & dissociative process, and order & change. Both constant and variable factors are covertly and overtly active here. The multi-ethnic and multi-lingual situation of Tripura has been reinforced by political turmoil. The trends of integration and disintegration have been surfaced into sharp relief.

Here the problem before us is to analyse the changing pattern of intercommunity relations for over a period of more than thirteen hundred years from 642 A.D. to 2000 A.D. If any year is to be chosen to go back to the starting point, then 642 A.D. may be taken up as a milestone. The immigrant and semi-nomadic Tipperah community flourished greatly after they had settled upon the resourceful Barak valley. The Tipperah chief, Adi Dharma-pha, had arranged at the Barak valley on the auspicious day of *Purnima*, 30 *Magha*, 563 Saka era (= 21 January 642 A.D.) a big *Yagna* (=sacrifice) which was officiated by five Brahmana priests of Mithila; the priests were convinced to settle down in a large tract of land (=Pancha Khanda)[1].

From the methodological point of view we are following neither the Durkheimian approach of functional integration, nor the Marxian approach of conflict. The MacIverian approach which means to say that society is co-operation crossed by conflict, seems to be a rational one.

Another very important aspect is that the long tradition of ruling a kingdom by a single dynasty made the capital the hub of all major activities, and the Tripuri dynasty became the prime movers. So the local historic tradition has reduced this discussion Tripuri dynasty-centric.

1. Relations between the Tripuri dynasty and the Bengalees & Brahmanas

The simple culture of the immigrant, preliterate, semi-nomadic Mongoloid Tripuri community came in contact with the complex culture of the local Bengalees and the Brahmanas. The simple culture adopted many essential tools and

techniques of the complex culture. This adoption enriched the community materially. It relieved the community from certain deficiencies.

Not only that, the great sacrifice of 642 A.D. was followed by a process of sanskritisation. A good number of Brahmanas from Mithila had been honourably given settlement at *Pancha khanda* of Sylhet. The process of acculturation and sanskritisation broke isolation and bridged the two communities. It accelerated the process of state-formation, for which neither alone was capable. The Tripuri dynasty became the connoisseur of Indian arts & crafts, culture & civilisation; and built tanks and temples. The Bengalees were allowed to hold offices under the government of the Tripuri dynasty. The Tripuri kings granted lands to the Brahmanas. The Brahmans were appointed priests, court-poets, bureaucrats and even ministers. The Tripuri soldiers and the Bengali soldiers, with a corporate spirit, poured out their blood like water in battle-fields to defend Tripura. The Bengali soldiers recruited from the four *varnas*, came to be known as Laskar[2]; their descendants survive evey to-day.

The Hindu kings of undivided Bengal did never attack Tripura. The Hindu zamindars of Bengal sent diggers to dig the tanks of Amar Manikya. The Bengali soldiers did never change allegiance in the battle-field out of greed or grievance.

The Tripuris and the Bengalees have, however, failed to save the western part (=Meghna valley) of Tripura from the destructive inroads of the iconoclasts. The nemesis has overtaken the destiny of Tripura in general, and the Tripuri-

Bengalee relations in particular. The heavy influx of the Bengali religious refugees from the Meghna valley into Hill Tripura has generated anti-Bengali sentiment. The genesis of tribal insurgency, the violent riot of June 1980, the ethnic cleansing, the formation of the Tripura Tribal Areas Autonomous District Council (1979) and the killing of many *jawans* of the Indian security forces may be partly understood from this angle of anti-Bengali sentinment generated since 1947 A.D. The Tripuri-Bengalee relation began with co-operation, but ended in conflict.

2. Relation between the Tripuri dynasty and the Muslims

For the Tripuri-Muslim relation the year 1240 A.D. is the landmark. In 1240 A.D. a hand-to-hand flight took place on the bank of the river Kosiara in Sylhet. Hiravanta Khan advanced at the head of a horde. In that combat, the Tripura king Chhengthoom-pha (c. 1225-1250 A.D.) defeated the horde[3]. Hiravanta Khan was the precusor of scourges of the people of Tripura. Next came Shah Jellal in 1257 A.D. from Yemen[4]; as he advanced, he was joined by band and gang in such numbers that, when he reached Srihatta (=Sylhet), the Tripuri dynasty found it impossible to resist. The horde massacred the Bengali landlord Gourgovinda and struck terror into the refractory Tripuri dynasty. The Tripuri dynasty had left Sylhet & Kaliash-har & Dharmanagar region and took shelter at Rangamati in the Gomati valley in the distant south. Here also the dynasty could not escape the destructive hands of the iconoclasts. So since 1240 A.D. Tripura's western frontier was in perpetual danger of

attacks. During this period (1240 to 1765 A.D.) most of the energies of Tripura were called upon to combat the insatiable ambition of the Afghan and the Mughal overlords. The foreign hordes led Tripura into such a labyrinth of difficulties and problems that it is impossible to be extricated from them.

Yet, there was no discrimination in Tripura. The Muslims were not debarred from holding offices and practising religion. The kings granted lands free of all taxes for Muslim religious institutions. During certain Muslim festivals, public holidays would be observed. Maharaja Govinda Manikya built the Suja mosque at Comilla, and granted lands for its maintenance, though Suja was behind the dethronement of Govinda Manikya[5]. The motely composition of the Tripura army had many Afghan mercenary who treacherously changed side during the reign of Vijay Manikya[6]. The cabinet of Maharaj Bir Bikram had a Muslim representative.

Yet, after the demise of Maharaja Bir Bikram on 17 May 1947 A.D., the western part of Tripura was captured by the Muslims through atrocities; and violent attempts[7] were made to capture Hill Tripura also[8].

During the period from 1948 to 2000 A.D. the relations took a quite different turn. In their drastic attempts at ethnic cleansing, some tribal insurgents are being provided with all sorts of facilities in the nearby neighbouring country. The Tripuri-Muslim relation began with conflict and ends in co-operation. The nemesis of unholy alliance is

awaiting. If delivered from their common enemy, natural antipathy may revive in future.

3. Relations between the Tripuri dynasty and the Kuki-Lushai people :

The relations between the Tripuri dynasty and the Kuki-Lushai-Halam groups of people often became strained. The predatory people used to collect food, tools and ladies from the neighbouring Bengali settlements through raids and ravages[9]. It was a problem to the princely administration also. Dhanya Manikya's (1490-1515 A.D.) son-in-law was murdered by the Kuki people[10]. Dhanya's army under Ray Kacag took eight months to bring the Kukis under control[11]. The king sent an expedition. Maharaja Vijay Manikya (1528-1563 A.D.) had to be cautious against any alliance between the Kukis and the Jayantia king[12]. Maharaja Krishna Manikya was reduced to a fugitive by Samser Gazi; the Kukis attacked and severely wounded Krishna Manikya[13] and stopped paying taxes & tributes. Krishnakisor Manikya (1830-1849 A.D.) had to shift his capital from Old Agargala to New Agartala because of the fear of the Kuki raids[14]. Those who question the recurrence of Kuki raids in Chakla Roshnabad will do better to go through the account of Alexander Mackenzie[15].

The Tripuri-Kuki relation is not one way traffic. It is not that the Kukis went on raiding, and the Tripuris remained silent spectators. Dhanya Manikya's expedition against the Kukis continued for about eight months; and he introduced the scheme of *Hasham Bhojan* (= state dinner) during the

Durga Puja to entertain and honour all tribal chiefs and to check raids[16]. Vijay Manikya honoured the Kukis with gift[17]. Krishna Manikya sent expedition against the Kukis for taxes[18]. The rival claimants for the throne, Ramchandra and Sambhuchandra, provoked the Kukis to commit raids and to stop payment of taxes[19]. Birchandra Manikya (1862-1896 A.D.) sent the Kuki people to Udaypur in 1273 T.E. (= 1863 A.D.); the Kukis brought about two hundred heads of the Jamatia community[20]. The recurrent problem of Kuki raids in Chittagong, Noakhali, Comilla and Sylhet forced the British administration to demarcate the boundary along the northern and western fringe, and to set up police stations, and to appoint Political Agent in 1871 and to send expedition in 1871-1872[21]. All these measures bore fruit : part of the Kukis became reconciled to the yoke and came to be known as Halam; but another portion, under their chief, preferred freedom to fief and retired to the eastern hills. Quite reasonably, the Halam chief would be held in high respect during the annual state dinner[22].

4. Relation between the Tripuri dynasty and the Mogh :

The iconoclastic invasion of Sylhet forced the Tripuri dynasty to leave Sylhet & Kaliash-har region, and to migrate south-westward. In course of that diaspora, the Tripuri dynasty subverted Lika Raja, the Mogh chief of Rangamati in the Gomati valley[23]. So the Tripuri-Mogh relation began with conflict.

The Tripuri-Mogh relation took an ugly turn with the arrival of the Portuguese pirates in Chittagong in 1518 A.D.[24]

The pirates indulged in the use of sword and fire. Human beings and commodities were to them equally lucrative articles of commerce. They were brutally destructive and rapacious in slave trade[25]. An unholy alliance developed between the Moghs and the Portuguese[26]. Their joint atrocity and rapacity compelled many residents of Chittagong and Noakhali and Bhulua to take shelter in Tripura.

An Afghan adventurer named Adam Badshah pounced upon a portion of Arakan. It led to ill-feeling. Adam took shelter in Tripura. For providing shelter in Tripura to a culpable stranger and for refusing his extradition, war broke out between the Tripuri dynasty and the Mogh dynasty[27]. At the time of crisis, Adam quietly absconded. Amar Manikya (1577-1585 A.D.) of Tripura was dislodged and his capital town Udaypur was ravaged by the Moghs. The Moghs treacherously threw Amar's princes into confusion and vanquished them with least efforts. The Tripuri dynasty came to the end of its resources and wisdom. But later in 1662, the Mogh king offered hospitality to the fugitive king Govinda Manikya with dignity and equality suitable to the status of the Tripuri king[28]. After 1947 A.D., the Tripuri-Mogh relation took an altogether different turn. The iconoclastic inroads and terror in CHT since 1947 forced many tribes (Chakma, Jamatia, Mogh, Noatia, Lushai, Riang, Uchai, Santal, etc.) to take refuge in Tripura[29].

5. Relation between the Tripuri dynasty and the Riang community :

There are instances of co-operation and conflict in the relation between the Tripuri dynasty and the Riang

community. The Riang constitute the second major preliterate community in Tripura. The fact that Kala Khan Riang was an army officer of Dharma Manikya (1431-1461 A.D.) is an early instance of co-operation between the two communities[30]. In Dhanya Manikya's motley army Ray Kacham Riang and Ray Kacag Riang were army chiefs[31]; the saga of their dual leadership recalls the heroic adventures of Romulus & Remus, and of Chinggis & Jamukha. They were the soul of the Tripura army.

The next incident soured the relation for no fault of the Riang people. Maharaja Govinda Manikya's step-brother Nakshtra inflicted a deadly wound on the feelings of Govinda Manikya. With substantial Mughal help, Nakshtra usurped the throne in January-February 1662 A.D. The royal family silently retired into the hills of Chittagong. In the long course of tedious journey, the royal family, exhausted by fatigue, took refuge for some time at a Riang village. But the Riang people did not offer cordial reception; their cold behaviour forced the deposed king to move further into Arakan. Even the pious queen of Govinda Manikya could not restrain herself; she cursed the Riangs [32]. In Arakan the royal family of Tripura was treated with dignity and equality by the Mogh king (*Sri Rajmala*, 4th vol., p. 9).

In 1667 A.D. Govinda Manikya again became king for the second time. The peace-loving king did not take any retributive action against Nakshatra's family, against the Riangs and also against the provocative Mughals. The guiding principles of his administration were : peaceful co-existence and non-violence.

Nevertheless, an unintentional accident soured the Tripuri-Riang relation. How ? For timely rainfall, the kings of Tripura had been worshipping the water goddess Ganga every year in the winter season in the *Sukla Astami tithi* of *Magha* (=January-February). On this occasion, the river passage of the Gomati remains closed for a week. Govinda Manikya's priests and attendants closed the river passage. The Riangs had the traditional advantage of the Gomati to convey their wares to Sonamura except during the Ganga Puja. This year too unintentionally and unwittingly they were transporting bundles of bamboos down the river for sale. The rafters of bamboos broke the holy barricade. So the guards and priests reacted instantly and violently. The Riangs were beaten, arrested and put to jail. In the prison of Udaypur, the doomed prisoners awaited their capital punishment. In the eleventh hour the queen intervened. At dead of night, she made her entry into the jail. The convicts broke into tears for fear of death and pitifully begged pardon. The same queen treated them like her own children and offered them her own milk. They drank it and promised to remain faithful to the kings. The next day they were released. They returned with a sigh of relief and rejoice[33].

After about a century there arose an occasion in which the Riang community gave ample prove of their fidelity. When Samser Gazi subverted Tripura, and Krishna Manikya (1748-1783 A.D.) was reduced to a fugitive, wandering in the hills for about twelve years (1748-1760), it was the

Riang community who stood by the side of the forlorn king. They offered shelter & hospitality and fought on his behalf against the enemy[34]. The Riangs under their chief Chandiprasad Narayan heroically resisted the destructive expedition sent by the upstart usurper, Samser Gazi.

Yet, after about two centuries, another disturbance added dimension to the relation. During the second world war a few factors combined to stir the Riang community and to annoy the Tripuri dynasty. A clash of personality between two veterans (Debi Singh and Khagendra) came to the foreground. The Riang community became a divided house. Khagendra became the chief of the community; soon he indulged in selfish exploitation of the community. Scarcity of food because of the war and Bengal famine (1943-1944) added insult to injury. The disappointed people found in Ratanmani Noatia (c.1886-1943 A.D.) solace and a spokesman. Upon being briefed by Khagendra Ray-Chaudhuri, Maharaja Bir Bikram sent a contingent. It inflamed, and casualty took place. Ratanmani fled, and he was at last arrested in CHT and imprisoned at Agartala. With the tragic death of Ratanmani inside the prison the episode was closed[35]. Thus the Tripuri-Riang relation began with co-operation, and ended in conflict.

6. Relation between the Tripuri dynasty and the Jamatia community :

The Tripuri-Jamatia relation had a feudal base. Similarly, the Tripuri-Laskar relation also had the same feudal base. How ? Feudalism arose, Will Durant generalises, as the

military organisation of a harassed agricultural society; its virtues were martial rather than economic; its vassals & lords were expected to train themselves for war, and be ready at any moment to leave the plough share for the sword[36].

Feudalism definitely developed in Tripura. War held a large place in the life of the people of Tripura. The Jamatia community and the Laskar community bravely fought for Tripura during the medieval period. But during the period of peace (1765-1947 A.D.) political feudalism declined. So the Jamatias and the Laskars were gradually alienated and relegated.

At this stage a trouble arose in 1863 A.D. It is usually known as Jamatia revolt of 1863 A.D. The immediate cause of the trouble was the pressure for tax by an imprudent tax collector, namely Oakhirai Hazari. Oakhirai himself was a Jamatia. He was accompanied by his wife. As ill luck would have it, his wife became menstruant. He asked the Jamatia people to carry the lady on a cradle. They refused[37]. It led to altercation and affray.

Upon coming to Agartala, Oakhirai complained against the Jamatia community. Bir Chandra Manikya (1862-1896 A.D.) sent a band of Kooki people who ravaged several villages, killed many and arrested their leader Parikshit and brought about two hundred truncated heads at Agartala[38]. Thus the Tripuri-Jamatia relation began with co-operation and ended in conflict.

Observations

It appears that the Afghan-Mughal attacks, the Kuki raids, the Mogh-Portuguese treachery, and the dynastic fraternal jealosy scarcely separable from the Tripuri throne, reduced Tripura into a crumbling, disjointed & tottering kingdomn. The entire gamut of intercommunity relations has undergone a radical change since 1947 A.D. Enemies became friends, while friends became enemies. The old order changes yielding place to new. How ?

The administration of the Regent Maharani (1947-1949 A.D.) was confronted with three major problems : frontier territory (=Chakla Roshnabad in the Meghna valley) protection, refugee rehabilitation and tribal land protection. Her administration miserably failed in solving all these problems. Chakla Roshnabad went out of hands. The loyal Bengali Hindu subjects were forced by the Muslims to leave their hearth & home.

Behind this influx of the Bengali Hindus smouldered an impulse of fear and hatred in the tribal mind. The tribals forgave the crimes of the aggressors and imperialists, and forgot the sacrifice & sufferings of the Bengali Hindus in resisting the claws of imperialism. The tribal resentment found expression in various ways, peaceful and violent. It assumed the character of mass movement and manifested itself in attempts at strengthening the intertribal communication & co-operation and co-ordination and in consolidating the different tribes into a single cohesive nationality.

Companilismo is an Italian term. It indicates a mentality which finds some people together and excludes others as aliens. It marks a person off as not, in an intimate sense, belonging to one's own people[39]. In the intercommunity relations of Tripura, *companilismo* is manifesting itself in various forms. Under such circumstances, normless politics generates. The result is a dual mentality, hypocrisy, corruption, perversion, rivalry, competitive populism and double-dealing. The present situation has frightening aspects. There is much talk of hatred and violence. An aggressive tone underlies everywhere in the hills. Such a situation has already provided an ideal atmosphere for the provocative neighbours to fish out of troubled water. Such neighbours have been running with the hare and hunting with the hounds.

This study has few more lessons to teach. In politics gratitude does not last long[40]. The moment clash of interests takes place, people set aside gratitude and comes into unholy alliances with others. People soured by discontent and diplomacy often commit error of judgement. The nemesis of major blunders committed by the previous generations haunts the next generations. Samuel P. Huntington furnishes several examples to establish the emerging pattern of kin-backing-kin in international relations and politics[41]. Had Professor Huntington been here, he would have added one more example to strengthen his theory. The Machiavellian and the Marxian attempt at separating religion from politics

seems to be reversed as religion along with ethnicity, is increasingly intruding into politics. As such, a fanatic division of society on the basis of culture, ethnicity, kinship and religion is emerging. Religion seems to be vitamin rather than opium.

But a moderate anti-dote to the outbreaks of irrationalism & intellectual muddle which infect society from time to time, is an eternal *sine qua non* to peaceful co-existence.

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CHAPTER-XII

Transition in the tribal life-patterns of Tripura

Transition in the tribal life-patterns of Tripura

The tribal life of Tripura is marked by continuity and change. Tripura is no longer a relic of archaic tribal culture. The Tripura tribal culture is moving from simplicity to complexity. But the entire society has not been uniformly changed. Interaction of several factors contributed to rapid change, particularly since 1947. This paper deals with environmental, demographic, economic, social, religious and political changes in the Tripura tribal life.

1. Environmental changes

Before 1947 A.D. Tripura had two contrasting regions : hilly and plain. Tripura was much bigger that it is now. The state now covers an area of 10.491.69 sq.km. which is about half of its former size. The present territory is nearly the size of Jamaica. This land-locked province of the Indian Union stands between Assam and Bangladesh. Tripura is a geographically varied region. Hills and valleys occur almost alternately. From the spine of hills numerous streams flow. Rainfall is heavy in June-July-August, with some precipitation each month also. Wild flora and fauna were abundant once, but much less to-day. According to popular estimate, flora and fauna are being consumed almost twice as rapidly as they are being replaced by natural growth. It has its effect upon agriculture, rainfall, seasonal temperature, soil, river and flood. The disappearance of big game from the forest has reduced the importance of hunting.

Till the nineteenth century, Tripura retained medieval conditions of agriculture, communication, education, health and sanitation. In 1872 two schools were first started; in 1873 two dispensaries were first opened, and in 1875 one post-office was first set up[1]. Just after a century, their number has swelled many times. School, dispensary, post office, police station, bank, market and rations-shop are now within the reach of almost every village. Communication network has been established. Boats, elephants, horses, palanquins & pontoons have been replaced by hundreds of vehicles. Several streams have been harnessed for irrigation and hydroelectricity and fishery. Agartala is Tripura's transport hub. Such changes go hand in hand with increased population.

Modern roadways & railways have been urbanizing the rural countrysides also. The continuously active forces to bring about a vibrant Tripura are : the continued advance of enclosure & reclamation of waste land, advance of plough cultivation, scientific farming, horticulture, fishery, poultry farming to breed hen as meat-producing bird rather than eg-producing bird, and above all huge amount of central assistance, in splite of the fact that corruption, absentism, nepotism are facts beyond any doubt.

2. Demographic changes

Long ago the population of Tripura was largely homogeneous, but since the last few centuries it is becoming heterogeneous. Excess of immigration over emigration and excess of birth over death, and at the same time shrinkage of territory are leading to increasing density of population. The following table provides information about demographic features[2].

Table 1

Year	Total Population	Change	Density	% of ST	% of SC
1874-75	74,523		9	64	
1881	95,637	+28.33	10	55	
1891	1,37,575	+43.85	13	51.09	
1901	1,73,325	+25.98	17	52.89	
1911	2,29,613	+32.48	21	48.47	
1921	3,04,437	+32.59	29	56.37	
1931	3,82,450	+25.63	36	52	
1941	5,13,010	+34.14	49		
1951	6,45,707	+25.56	62	37	6.27
1961	11,42,005	+78.71	109	31.5	10.48
1971	15,56,342	+36.28	149	28.95	12.39
1981	20,47,351	+31.92	196	28.52	15.12
1991	27,44,827	+34.30	263		
2001	31,91,168	+15.74	304		
2011	36,71,032	14.75	350		

It is evident from the above table that decadal change shows fluctuations. The 1961 figures show an abnormally high rate of growth. Communal riots and other forms of persecution in E.P. compelled both the Bengali and the tribal Hindus to take refuge in Tripura. Apparently, the percentage of S.T. population to total population is decreasing; but their growth rate is above the national growth rate. Population growth, urban amenities and protective privileges have resulted in more and more tribal people leaving their villages and getting settled in urban areas particularly in Agartala. The major tribes are : Tipra (3,31,191), Riang (83,476), Jamatia (44,554), Chakma (35,079), Halam (29,040), Mogh (18,291) and Garo (7,311). These tribes represent a people primarily and formerly engaged in swidden farming, but later reluctantly engaged in plough cultivation in wet lands. A Tripuri's wealth would be counted by the number of his pigs.

3. Economic changes

The Tripura tribal economy consisting of food gathering, domestication of a few animals and birds, shifting cultivation, basketry, weaving and a little of exchange, has undergone significant changes. Its characteristic features like little specialisation, simple technology, dependence on forest, domestic mode of consumption and mixture of magic with economy, have partly disappeared. They are now taking to more efficient techniques and tools. They are a practical people. They have shifted to a great extent from their ancient economy

which had attendant magico-religious beliefs & practices. Dependence on wild flora and fauna for food has been reduced; shifting cultivation during November-December-January by slash-and-burn method on hill slope[3] is now marginally practised by a few families; the young generation hardly knows basketry and weaving; they have developed a high level of confidence while transacting goods and services with other peoples through modern coins, weights and measures. Plough cultivation has been introduced among them in the last quarter of the nineteenth century[4]. Indeed, they reluctantly adopted plough cultivation[5]. Now they are efficient plough cultivators. There has been, however, a remarkable reduction in the size of arable lands and grazing grounds mainly because of high population density. But the food resources are no longer widely dispersed and uncertain. Introduction of efficient tools and technology from their Bengali neighbours increased their capacity to exploit the environment. The classic pattern of periodic abandonment of fields and houses and the annual felling of trees and bushes and development of new fields, has been a thing of the past. There have emerged among them daily labourers, fishermen, rickshaw-pullers, white-collar job holders, businessmen, contractors, vendors, masons, gardeners, grocers and the like. It implies that a shift in the structure of occupation is going to take place; percentage of the labour force in agriculture is slowly declining. Reversely, labour force in the non-agricultural

sector is on the increase. Cultivator-labour and landloard-tenant relationships have emerged between the Tripuris and the Bengalees. Besides, other forms of symbiotic relationships have grown up between the local hills people and the plains people. The number of markets (93 in 1931) has multiplied many times after 1947. Formerly, most of the population was engaged in food production; now, a good number of them are dependent on others for most necessities. Formerly, they used to shift their place with shifting cultivation; in the past they would live in different but similar places; now they live in different places and work at different occupations with a large variety of tools and techniques. Their economy is on the way to become commercial, diverse and secular. In spite of all these changes, still in the interior hills some tribals partly depend on foraging and practise sedentary way of life. The overall situation is that the tribes of Tripura have already diverged significantly from their earlier way of life. The have turned, perforce, to agriculture and bureaucracy. Their transition from shifting cultivation to plough cultivation is irrevocable.

4. Social changes

Multidimensional social changes in the Tripura tribal life are afoot. In certain aspects of social and cultural life changes have already taken place; while in other aspects changes are on the way. It is equally significant to point out that all the tribes have not undergone equal degrees of social changes. Levels of cultural complexity may be

divided into such types as band, tribe, chiefdom, agrarian state, and industrial state. Superficially, Tripura society has already passed through the first three levels, and entered the agrarian state and on the threshold of the urban-industrial stage. So far as the tribal society is concerned, there are eighteen communities, and no community lives on the band-level culture. Every community has crossed the band-level culture long ago; a few have even crossed the tribe-level, and at least one tribe, namely the Tipperah community who use **'Dev Varman'** as surname, established a powerful kingdom in the early medieval period and carried on centralized power down to the mid-twentieth century.

Now coming to the details, what attracts first is the changing site of their hamlets. Formerly, they would prefer a summit of a high hill for construction of houses as a safety measure against enemy, wild animal and damp weather. Now they are leaving high hills for low hills, table lands and towns. Formerly, households of a village were members of the same tribe; Families belonging to another caste or community would not be allowed within a village. Each tribe had its own villages. The standard tribal village population numbered only a few hundreds (126 families) and a single village would remain in one place for a few years. This feature has gone, and mixed settlements are appearing. Now, their village population often number many hundred and a single village remains in one place for many generations. In days of yore, each family had only

one big house with raised platform. The traditional houses were hygienic, spacious and uniform in pattern, with pigs and farm equipments on the ground floor, and living quarters above, but very much prone to fire accident. Bamboo, cane and wood were lavishly used as building materials[6]. All these are becoming out of fashion. New houses with mud-walls, corrugated tin roofs and pucca buildings are replacing the old ones. To-day each family builds a few small houses around a clean courtyard. The old practice of raising many granaries in a row by each household at a little distance from living huts to protect paddy from fire, is abandoned. The Sema Nagas[7] and the Lhota Nagas[8] also had separate collection of granaries placed at a distance to secure them against fire. Bachelors' dormitory called *Chikla michip nok* or *Duaing nok*, so pivotal an organization, has disappeared since the mid-twentieth century. The vacuum has been filled in by many non-kinship associations and voluntary organizations which draw their membership from various communities.

Joint family, so common a feature in the past, is breaking down, and small nuclear families are growing up, followed by fragmentation of hearth, home and field. Anciently, parents having a number of daughters had a sense of complacence. To get the hand of a bride, a groom had to serve her family a few years[9]. With the passage of time, the custom of marriage by service is now backdated. The position is getting reversed. An educated and employed groom gets dowry consisting of bicycle, radio, T.V., wrist-

watch, utensils and furniture. The bride's parents had an upperhand not only in the fixation of bride-price, but also in seeking divorce. The frequency of divorce and remarriage is rather low at present. Inter-tribal and inter-community (plains people and hills people) marriages are on the increase. In the range of invitation on socio-religious occasions, persons belonging to other castes and communities are also included. Their marriage ceremony now separately include certain Vedic, Buddhist & Christian rites also. Changes in the postmarital residence and marital type are noticeable. Though patrilocal residence continues to be the most popular type, neolocality is also emerging. Even among the matriarchal Khasi and Garo people, educated service-holders prefer neolocal residence. In form, both monogamy and polygyny have been in practice; but polygyny is losing its popularity. The institution of hypergamy was in existence among the princes, nobles, ministers and soldiers as a mark of status.

According to the 1981 census, there are 5,83,920 tribal people in Tripura. This figure does not consist of isolated individuals. They are divided into 18 tribal communities. Each of these major groups is divided into a number of clans; clans into lineages; and lineages into families. On the basis of age and sex, there were such groups as bachelors' group; spinsters' group; work group consisting of both bachelors and spinsters; village council consisting of the elderly males. Family stands at the bottom and tribe stands at the top. Excepting these two groups (family and tribe),

the intermediate groups are getting dwindled. The wave of change has touched the traditional status and role; certain types of status and role like that of king and subjects, chief and subordinates, headman and villagers, priest and worshippers, and *chikla michip* (=leader of the young) and mates have disappeared almost completely; while new types of status and role like minister or MLA and voters, doctors and patients, officers and citizens, teachers and students, have emerged. Accordingly, the traditional division of labour no longer holds good to-day. And all these changes have shifted the former base of rank, power and honour. Signs of alteration manifest themselves in the field of means and modes of expression, communication and recreation also. *Anorexia nervosa* is a concept to denote a culture-specific disorder in some Western societies. It appraises brightness, slenderness, slimness, smartness & youth in dress, ornament, fashion, food habit, cleanliness among the girls and young ladies. To live up to this expectation, they often behave abnormally and odorously. This trend has reached here in India also.

A word may be permitted as to their food habit. Swidden agriculture (=*jhum* =*joom*=*hook*, which is a polyculture) resulted in deforestation and extermination of wild animals; it partly resulted in protein deficiency also. One common solution to this problem is their wholesale consumption of wines, dry fish and pork.

It is equally important to note a very remarkable change. In Tripura, as in Greece of Plato and Aristotle, slavery was a

well-known institution[10]. The Political Agent's report of 1875-76 has left a vivid description of slavery.

Intergenerational changes should not go unnoticed. Such changes are influencing parent-child relationship. The traditional patterns of socialization are giving place to new ones. New pattern of child-rearing, education and personality development to prepare the children for participation in the outside world are being worked out. The children are hardly expected to grow up as shifting cultivators, and nursed lavishly & shielded tenderly from the hardships. Before 1947-48, if a boy's father had been a shifting cultivator or a plough cultivator, the possibility was that the boy also would be shifting cultivator or plough cultivatior; only exceptionally energetic boy would emerge from that rural background. But after 1947-48 numerous average young people have been climbing up out of their background. To utter the name of husband, father-in-law, etc. was formerly a taboo to the wife. Now-a-days, the growing tendency is to address the husband by name in the Bengali families. With a fatalistic belief in horoscope, guardians would compare the horoscope of bride & groom. Now, there has been a considerable erosion in this belief. Parallelly, *anolom & pratilom* marriages are on the rise in the Bengali families. A few generations ago, only handful of students would take courses in Honours, a course then considered as useful to the meritorious students as engineering or medical science is to-day.

5. Religious changes

Like many other communities, the Tipperahs, the Riangs, the

Jamatias, the Noatias, the Uchais, the Lushais, the Halams, the Kukis, the Garos, the Moghs and the Chakmas of Tripura undoubtedly possess religious beliefs and practices. The traditional religious system of the tribes of Tripura consist of four major subsystems, namely-belief in supernatural beings, belief in supernatural power, symbolic expression of feelings and ritual behaviour. Considering the essential four components of popular religions[11], there seems to be hardly any difference between the religion of advanced communities and that of the tribes of Tripura.

However, the tribes of Tripura formerly had a culture having simple economy. When there was little surplus, little specialization and little law and order, some individuals could not devote their full time to sacerdotal activities. The religious rituals also had not been institutionalized in those days. The economy could not afford to support non-producers.

Anthropology has it to comment that in so many preliterate communities the function of the chief and of the mediator with the supernatural, used to be discharged by the same individual[12]. The discharge of political and religious functions by the same hand did not appear to be an inconsistency to those people. It may be reasonable to imagine that long ago similar situation was in existence in the preliterate, simple societies of Tripura. That this assumption is not altogether unfounded, can be guessed from the fact that till the late twentieth century the priest was an ex-officio member of the traditional village council[13]. In other words, though the functions of priest and of village headman have been differentiated in course of the process of evolution, the

two sets of functions continue to remain interdependent. To determine certain cases of false witness and perjury, the service of priest was required. As these semi-nomadic communities moved from one socio-economic setting to another, there continued a gradual shifting of status and role of priest and chief.

The process of differentiation and institutionalization is most prominent in the case of the Tipperah community. The Tipperah dynasty was forced to leave Sylhet in the later part of the thirteenth century because of external attacks. The dynasty settled in the Gomati valley in the south-west and ruled over a vast territory; the existence of a large population, and an empire, and recurrence of external aggression brought about heavy administrative responsibilities. Evidently, withdrawal of potential man-power from the production of subsistence commodities had its impact on religion also. The dynasty built temples, engaged priests to ensure regular worship of the deities and institutionalized certain ceremonies. All these constituted a positive change in ritual behaviour.

A parallelism between Africa and Tripura may be helpful to bring into sharp relief the supernatural aspect of the tribal religion of Tripura. In South Africa, the absence of a sacerdotal caste is marked; the fact that much of the religious life centres on ancestral cult, is responsible for the absence of the priestly order; among the Bemba and the Bantu, for example, the belief in the ancestral cult is very strong[14], and chieftainship depends on sanction by the ancestors. But among the Baganda of Uganda in East Africa a belief in the supernatural beings is prominent. Unlike the Bembas and the Bantus of South Africa,

and like the Bagandas of East Africa, the tribes of Tripura have a strong belief in supernatural beings and supernatural powers.

According to the traditional belief of the tribes of Tripura, there are supernatural beings, spirits, ghosts and goblins in the hills, forests, rivers, paddy fields and valleys[15]; the gods have their wives and children, some gods are benevolent, and others are malevolent and mischievous. The mischievous deities like Buracha and Haichukma kidnap babies and domestic animals. The relationship between the supernatural beings and the human beings is one of friendship and enmity. It resembles interhuman relationship. These deities figure prominently in ceremonies, folktales and mythology. A pair of stone, male and female, which annually breed children, are preserved in the *Lakshmi-patil*; similar belief may be found among the Nagas also[16]. The practice of head-hunting immediately after the death of a chief or any tribal, so common in Tripura and north-eastern India[17], has been modified, and instead a chicken is sacrificed[18].

The deities and spirits are believed to be numerous. The active and strong forces of nature are symbolized by male deities, while the passive and mild forces are by female deities, as in ancient Egypt and Phoenicia. The gods are not indifferent to the day-to-day events of the tribal life. The gods are concerned with drinking water, homestead, paddy field, domestic animals, babies, granary, path, disease and death. One category of gods are benevolent, the second category of gods are mischievous, while a third category deal with death and life after death. As their life was so permeated with a

martial spirit, they placed certain benevolent gods in direct defence of the kingdom. The annual festival of Ker Puja is held for defence against any attack and aggression; such gods are not destitute of heroism.

Usually, cultures vary in attributing their misfortunes to a variety of causes. The Arunta of Australia attribute death to the malice of some neighbouring groups; the Navajo of America attribute misfortune to fellow members; the Baganda of Africa attribute misfortune to inadvertent neglect of any deceased ancestor[19]. The Tipperah, the Riang, the Lushai-Kuki-Halam, the Noatia, the Garo of Tripura generally attribute most of the misfortunes to the malice of some malevolent gods and of neighbour and neighbouring groups. Such attribution reduces the scope of self-correction, of peaceful coexistence and of secular scientific thinking; and enhances the scope of magic & witchcraft, of sacrifices and of conflict.

Man-supernature relationship and man-technology relationship stand in inverse ratios. In other words, the more people develop pragmatic control over environment and disease through science and technology, the less the people become dependent on spirits. Obviously, with the rapid spread of literacy (2.28% in 1901; 73.66% in 2001), with the rapid development in health care (2 allopathic dispensaries in 1873; 604 allopathic, 33 ayurvedic and 45 homeopathic health centres in 1999-2000), a positive change has come; the people have gained a considerable control over the environment and disease. It has its ever widening, slow but steady, impact on the magico-religious behaviour of the people.

But an altogether different influence has put the tribal

religious system into severe stress and strain in recent years. It is one thing to reform certain practices like head-hunting at the deathbed of a chief; but it is quite another thing to dismiss the whole religious system as irrational and vile. It has a similar precedence in Bengal. The students of Henry Louis Vivian Derozio (1808-1831 A.D.) in Calcutta used to condemn and ridicule the Hindu religion; the Hindu religion was denounced as vile and corrupt and unworthy of the regard of rational beings[20]. Similarly, a large group of young boys and girls of the tribal communities of Tripura, alienated from their traditional socio-religious setting, are less likely to believe in so many supernatural beings and powers. Not only that, they are out to maintain long distance from Hinduism. Never had the ancestral tribal religion been more sharply rejected, never had the validity of another religion has been more uncompromisingly asserted; and never in any previous process of acculturation had the break in continuity appeared so absolute. The new movement that has already started developing is made up of more European than of local elements.

Is the Tripura tribal religion wholly worthless? What is the opinion of the pioneering anthropologists and philosophers?

Redfield gives us to understand the significance of the concept of cultural relativism which broadly answers the above questions. Redfield took pains to summarise the converging opinions of Malinowski (1884-1942 A.D.), of Herskovits (1895-1963 A.D.) and of Ruth Benedict, and noted that all cultures are equally valid[21]. Emile Durkheim (1858-

1917 A.D.) in his *The Elementary Forms of Religious Life*, considered this problem and emerged with the dictum, "There are no false religions". His basic argument was that religious rituals provide a means of organizing the sentiments of the group, thereby making possible the maintenance of group solidarity[22]. Several thousand years back the same problem had been considered by the Indian philosophy, and the *Siva Mahimnah Stotra* put the dictum thus : 'As the different rivers, taking their start from different mountains, running straight or crooked, at last come unto the ocean, so the different paths which men take through different tendencies, various though they appear, crooked or straight, all lead unto thee'. A convincing elucidation of this doctrine by Swami Vivekananda (1863-1902 A.D.) in 1893 A.D in Chicago got wide applause. The Indian approach accepts the validity of the different traditions (*Sarvagama Pramanya*). Every tradition which helps man to understand his environment, which assists him to live in freedom and friendship with his neighbours, which helps him to lift his heart to the Divine is worthy of acceptance. It is very significant to point out that the Indian philosophy does not indiscriminately give blank cheque to any tradition and culture. Instead, it puts three criteria : freedom, friendship and sublimation. According to this criteria, certain customs like head-hunting, animal sacrifice are irrational and hence discouraged. The Indian philosophy preferred the democratic course of harmonization to the dictatorial course of extermination and subordination[23].

Beals, Hoijer and Beals have highlighted certain positive aspects of religious rituals. It is instructive to note some of

their observations as follows : mythologies concerning individual festivals inevitably stress the importance of the festival as a means of securing divine favour and promoting the general good. In additional to this official excuse, it is apparent that the festival provides opportunities to display the athletic or dramatic talents of its marriageable young men. It also provides lucrative opportunities for village religious functionaries and businessmen. The holding of the festival may serve as a means of arresting internal conflicts because a co-operative spirit must be maintained if the festival is to be held. Just as the threat of war may create solidarity in the face of an outside threat, so the necessity of preparing for a festival may create solidarity[24].

The doubters and detractors of the tribal religious system of Tripura will do well if they consider the above opinion. The place of religious ceremonies has been filled by an elaborate series of secular ceremonies that are fully as wasteful and time-consuming as anyone else's religious ceremonies[25]. Not only that, the national character of the Ker Puja, and the message of solidarity in the Chaudda Devata must be seriously considered while denouncing the religious heritage of Tripura. Tripuri religion is not only polytheistic, but also henotheistic. Henotheism is a system of religion in which one God dominates over a crowd of small gods. Polytheistic religion is accommodative & democratic; monotheistic religion is intolerant and dictatorial.

Frequency of crisis & calamity would formerly lead the Tripuris and the Bengalees to institute social friendship (= *Dharmer Bhai, Dharmer bhain,* etc.). With the progress in

social welfare measures, the urgency of forging ahead for social friendship bas been reduced.

But alas! unethical politics has generated groups of cruel, ferocious, murderous, mammonist groups. They are frittering away their energy on factional rivalry. To what a pitch the daring of these groups has reached! The assertors of equality & liberty are engrossers of equality & liberty! New foes with old faces! Public administration has to be backed by certain noble principles to displace the policy of plunder at home & opposition outside. Now, woodenness & opportunism persist side by side.

6. Political changes

Those behaviour patterns relevant to the perpetuation of a socio-economic structure, may be broadly called political culture. In other words, establishment and enforcement of certain behavioural standards, and circulation of individuals from status to status is the prime concern of political culture. Like all other patterns of culture, political culture is also subject to change.

The Tripura tribal political culture has been changing from simplicity to complexity. A few symptoms of change are : decreasing emphasis on kinship, more centralized political control, more secular ideology, more status-remaking, decreasing dependence on oral tradition, increasing emphasis on written laws.

Anthropology delineates four general levels of complexity of political culture. These are : band, tribe, chiefdom and kingdom or state. **Band** is a seminomadic, kinship-based

society with no full-time government, economically based on a foraging subsistence technology[26]. **Tribe** is a semisedentary kinship-based society without a full-time government, economically based on a simple food domestication subsistence technology, either horticulture or pastoralism[27]. **Chiefdom** is a society often of many villages, that has a government capable of coordinating social action within and between villages, but in which governmental authority is balanced by the legal autonomy of families in many areas[28]. **State** is the most complex society with an independent full-time government having considerable control over many communities and a tract of land, theoretically monopolizing the right to use legal force within its boundaries, and to levy taxes and tributes, to pass laws and to draft people into work or war[29].

The above anthropological scale of ethnic evolution is quite useful to determine the place of individual tribes in the hierarchy of political status. While not a single tribe remains in the band stage, one community, the Tipperah tribe, reached the stage of state. In other words, all the tribes of Tripura have crossed the first stage, and are in varying stages of status shifting. The Chakmas and the Moghs attained kingdom in Chittagong Hill Tract and in Arakan respectively, but in Tripura they are splintered groups. The Lushai-Kuki-Rangkhal-Halam have attained state only recently in Mizoram, but in Tripura they are splintered groups. The Garos and the Khasis have recently attained statehood in Meghalaya, but in Tripura they are splintered groups. The Riangs have obviously passed the first two stages and attained chiefdom. The Jamatias also

have attained chiefdom.

A word of explanation may be added here about the attainment of state-society by the Tipperah community. What accelerated the progress of the Tipperah people? How did they surpass their cognates? How did they rise to prominence?

The Tipperah community too lacked knowledge of blacksmithy, carpentry, pottery, animal husbandry and plough cultivation, like many other communities in north-eastern India. But the Tipperah community was forced by some turbulent tribes to leave high hills, and to settle in the low hills in the lower valley of the river Barak. This region comprises Sylhet and northern side of Tripura. In this region the Bengalees too had settlement from the distant past. The Bengalees represent a people of complex culture. Sylhet and northern Tripura was the highway between Bengal and Assam, and between Bengal and Manipur, as much as Asia Minor was the highway between Asia and Europe, and as Palestine was the highway between Asia and Africa. For the simple culture of the Tipperah people, it became a blessing in disguise. It facilitated the process of acculturation and sanskritisation. The Tipperah came out of chiefdom and increasingly took a national outlook.

Another important factor was that the Afghan, the Pathan and the Mughal overlords repeatedly put the Tipperah dynasty to the sword from 1240 to 1765 A.D. Yet the Tipperah dynasty maintained its existence and integrity; some of its kings like Dharma Manikya, Dhanya Manikya (1490-1515) and Vijay Manikya (1528-1563) with courage, enthusiasm and sagacity defended the kingdom against foreign aggression; they built

forts, recruited army, levied taxes & tributes and dug tanks and erected temples, and united the eastern hills with the western valleys, east of the river Meghna.

That was a time of troubles (1240-1765 A.D.) followed by a period of peace (1765-1947 A.D.) when many reforms and legislations were introduced. But in 1947-1948 A.D. the ghust of iconoclastic frenzy swept away the dynasty. The dynasty handed over the kingdom to the government of India and thus heaved a sigh of relief. But an influx of large number of tribal and Bengali Hindu religious refugees from Chittagong Hill Tract, Chittagong, Noakhali, Comilla and Sylhet (wich were parts of Tripura) triggered off anti-Bengali riots in Hill Tripura among some tribal people. The tribal communities of Tripura who knew each other only as former enemies, now, since 1947 A.D., know each other as fellow sufferers. A new sense of common ancestry and brotherhood, a new sense of common culture and brotherhood, like the Ghost dance in America, has been assuming a political and secular character with mass participation. The extermination of the Bangalees first from their ancestral homes in the Meghna valley and afterwards from the colonies set up in the interior of eastern hills of Tripura resembles the extermination of the Chirokees from North Carolina, northern Georgia and Virginia in 1830[30].

The other aspects of change in the Tripura tribal political culture may be briefly indicated. In the days of yore, any recurrence of misfortunes during the tenure of a chief or headman was supposed to be supernatural punishment for supernatural disliking of the chief or headman. Hence, he would be removed; and he would blame no one but himself.

Such belief has gone out of date now. Long ago, when the communities were small and preliterate, norms and behaviour would usually coincide; non-conforming behaviour was negligible. Now, norms and codes of conduct are increasingly being replaced by written and secular laws, and non-conforming behaviour is rampant. Oratory is now a daily necessity.

As elsewhere, so in Tripura there are now many kinds of conflict and co-operation. Conflicts ranging from games to warfare are many : games & sports, school examination & general election, riot & insurgency, job & employment have been colouring the political culture. The elections excite and traumatize the people with mobs moving through the streets with banners, flags, satires, slogans, songs, shibboleths and forbidding tunes. Even hundreds of housewives are made to come out and line the processions. Festoons & *mooli* bamboos are erected in front of each booth. Door-to-door approaches for 'note & vote' intensify the battles of creed & greed.

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CHAPTER -XIII

Ethnicity & identity of Tripura tribes

Ethnicity & identity of Tripura tribes

The question of ethnicity and identity of the Tripura tribes has assumed a considerable proportion since 1947 A.D. Tripura and the neighbouring states have become a hot bed of politics and communal violence. This trend has been variously termed. There are some genuine grievances and historic mistakes. Between the two major communities there are grounds of discontent. In spite of administrative response and positive reforms, tribal impatience rises. Provocative neighbours are exacerbating the tribal resentment. The one-sided publicity has affected a balanced judgement. Tripura has been made to suffer the distresses of territorial loss and failure of crisis management. The key to Tripura's future is in the sagacious understanding of her past. But some provocative neighbours with a perfidious policy of fomenting every unrest, of shedding crocodile tears and of shaping the affairs so as to consort with their own interests, are making the problems intricate; the discontent is turned to their advantage.

Tribal resentment

The tense situation implies that the tribals have a lot of complaints[1]. What are those? Their grievances, ventilated in papers and journals, in conferences and conflicts, may be summarized in the following words:

1. Merger of Tripura with the Indian Union is illegal
2. Merger has caused sufferings of the tribals
3. Tribal lands have been grabbed by the Bengalees
4. Tribals have been outnumbered by the Bengalees
5. Tribal language has been neglected
6. Tribals have been reduced to beggary
7. The Tripuri rulers have their status shifted and reduced
8. The Tripuri Kshatriyas have their status shifted and reduced to tribes
9. Scarcity of land has attenuated the shifting cultivation
10. Tribal culture is in danger
11. Tribals are deprived of their rights
12. The Bengalees cheat the tribals in markets and offices
13. Influx of refugees from Bangladesh continues unabated

14. Major political parties are insincere towards tribal welfare
15. Brahmana priests exploited the tribal disciples
16. Bengali moneylenders exploited the tribals
17. The Bengalees are foreigners
18. Dereservation of tribal reserved lands was illegal & harmful
19. Setting up of Bengali colonies in the interior east was unwise.

Obviously, most of the grievances are against the Bengalees. The tribals, in turn, identified themselves as the victims of exploitation, deception, forgery, and encroachment. The victims demonize their opponents, often portraying them as subhuman beings, and argue to perpetrate cruelties as justifiable. So relations with the Bengali Hindus began to deteriorate. The influx, however forced, disgraced the Bengali Hindus in the eyes of the tribals.

In March 1941 in Dacca broke out a riot in which the Hindu temples were desecrated, images broken, shops plundered, houses burnt and ladies raped and kidnapped. Such riots recurred for about three decades, and were followed by exodus of the Hindus who took shelter in Tripura and Assam, in West Bengal and other parts of India. The tribals and the Bengali Hindus came dangerously near together since the second world war; it is the main channel of recent history.

From this time forward some tribals of Tripura conceived a hatred, undisguised and deadly, against the Bengali Hindus. The hatred first manifested itself in the formation of the Seng Krak (1947 A.D.), a secret militant tribal organization similar to the Know-Nothings and the Ku-Klux-Klan of America. Its leaders ill-treated the refugees. The Regent Maharani's Dewan A.B. Chattopadhya (21.12.1947 - 17.11.1948) banned the organization. The leaders then formed Paharia Union (July 1951) . Thus, organizations multiplied one after another and extremism gradually mounted high. The scism between the two societies became so bitter that the dispute came soon to be decided by the ultimate appeal to arms.

Tribal strategies

To redress their grievances, the tribals have adopted multi-strategy approach. They have simultaneously started a multi-dimensional struggle on all possible fronts. The movement manifests itself in the formation of various associations and organizations, in the establishment of Kak-barak schools, in the publication of various books, journals and newspapers, in strengthening inter-tribal communications and marriage, in consolidating different tribes, in the growing identification of the tribals with their Kak-barak language, in their demand for a script different from that of the Bengalees, in politicizing the tribals to vote for tribal parties, in organizing various meetings, in articulating their demands, in launching campaigns against

addiction, child marriage, dowry and marriage by physical service, in imparting training in fire arms to the tribal youths in the deep forest, and in committing arson, assassination, genocide, pillage, treason, treachery, and ravage. In June 1980 the tension reached its climax and a violent riot took place. A section of the young leaders have already started speaking the language of the battlefield. For decades they had been unremittingly assiduous in repairing their loss. If Sahadev Bikram-Kisor's advice for a buffer zone had been taken, much bloodshed would have been saved.

Tribal organisations

In order to launch such a gigantic movement they have built a number of parties and pressure groups, para-political and para-military organisations which serve as organizational vehicles for tribal consciousness. The following list will amply illustrate the point: Tripura Jana-Siksha Samiti(1945), Tripur Sangh (1946), Seng-krak (1947), Tripura Ganamukti Parishad(1948), Paharia Union (1951), Adivasi Samiti(1952), Tripura Rajya Adivasi Sangh(1953), Adivasi Samsad (1954), East India Tribal Union (1956), Tripura Upajati Juba Samiti(1967), Tripura Upajati Karmachari Samiti (1968), Kak-barak Sahitya Sabha (1968), Tripura Tribal Students' Federation (1968), Barkhi Halam (1974), Tripura National Volunteers (1979), Tripura-Sundari Nari-bahini (1980), All Tribal People's Liberation Organisation (1980), Tripura Hills People's Party (1983), Lama Kautal (1985), Tripura Tribal Socio-Cultural Development Organisation (1989), All Tripura Tribal Force

(1991). Thus by activating a wide range of associations, attempts were made for both revenge and profit. They hastened to use the force they had collected. They proceeded with severity & cruelty.

Relations among organisations

It is evident from the above list that these associations have been formed along the lines of ethnic identity. All these associations are not equally active and alive. Certain unions like Paharia Union, Adivasi Samiti, East India Tribal Union, etc. are almost dead now. Tripura gana mukti Parishad (TGP) and Tripura Hills People's Party (THPP) are CPI(M)-supporting parties. The Tripura Upajati Juba Samiti (TUJS) is probably the most prominent of all parties now active in Tripura tribal politics. In alliance with the Indian National Congress party, the TUJS was then (1988-1992) ruling in Tripura. Nevertheless, relations among various organisations were initially cordial. These units were expected to maintain close co-operation and co-ordination. But relationship among them seems to be not so cordial mainly because of ideological, religious, strategical and personal differences. As the strained relation continues, there are friends and enemies among them: and there are instances of alliances forged and broken. Tripur Sangha had little political intention. But it was the Seng-krak which early took up the grievances of the tribals against the consequences of the influx of the Bengalees. Slight as is our knowledge of the relation, only the broad features have been outlined.

Nature of the movement

This movement is not following a single, uniform pattern and path. Over the last fifty years, divisions and diversions have occurred. The movement has both mild and wild, evolutionary and revolutionary, Gandhian and Marxian, centripetal and centrifugal, subnational and national trends. Both ballot and bullet have been used. It is widely believed that many tribal leaders primarily adhere to ethnocentric interests even when they publicly speak of multi-racism and mixed culture of Tripura; they bank upon tribal pride and solidarity for mass mobilization. To the leaders of this movement, the question involved is not one of colour and racial discrimination; it is a question of dispossession of land, and it is a question of intrusion of the Bengalees. So the movement is directed against the Bengali colonies and against those Bengalees irrespective of caste and class. The reason for making such a contradictory remark and apparently confusing assessment about the nature of the movement is that the tribal leaders do not represent a unified front and differ in their aims, objects and strategy. Comprehension of the character of the movement demands a brief reference to the situation in Spain and Yugoslavia. The Spanish civil war (1936-1939) was a power-struggle between the left-wing and the right-wing forces. It was a clash between two ideologies. Contrarily, the Yugoslav war was a clash of cultures and communities. It was a struggle in which ethnic and religious identity played a prominent part. What has been happening

in Tripura is more Yugoslav than Spanish in character. The old generation of Bosnians were Europe-oriented, the new generation is Arab-oriented. The old generation of tribal people in Tripura was India-oriented, the new generation is shifting its orientation.

Administrative response

The attainment of independence in 1947 A.D. and the expansion of democracy forced the government to inaugurate plans and programmes for the betterment of the backward and poor citizens. The constitutional directive for rapid tribal development has admonished various departments of both central and state governments. If the TTAADC is taken as another government, in Tripura three governments are having plans and programmes for tribal welfare and exercising their brains to find, discover, invent and incorporate new schemes. The following list, though incomplete, will illustrate it:

1. The tribals have free access to public academies, bathing ghats, cremation grounds, gardens, hotels, hostels, restaurants, roads, shops, tanks, wells (Art. 15)
2. There are effective provisions for the reservation of appointments and posts for them; (Art. 16)
3. They have formed a number of associations and published books and journals; (Art. 19)
4. They have right to establish and administer academies; (Art. 30)

5. Constitutionally Bihar, M P and Orissa ought to have Tribal Welfare Minister (T W M); but conventionally Tripura too has a T W M; (Art. 164)
6. Seats are reserved in Parliament, Legislative Assembly, Municipal bodies, District Council, Block and Gaon Panchayet; (Art. 330, 333, etc.)
7. The Commissioner for SC & ST has been appointed by the President of India; (Art. 338)
8. Commissions have been appointed by the President of India to report on the state of welfare, problems and prospects of the ST; (Art. 339)
9. Certain communities have been specified as ST by the President of India; (Art. 342). In Tripura 19 such communities have been specified.
10. They are exempted from direct income tax.
11. The A I R has been announcing some programmes in the Kak-barak dialect since 1957.
12. The T L R & L R Act (1960) prohibits transfer of tribal lands to non-tribals all over Tripura.
13. An Ordinance of 1973 has declared void all cases of transfer of land which took place after 1.1.1969. The hilly, jungly, boggy tribal lands made cultivable and fertile by the Bengali purchasers are being taken back by the government at a nominal price and offered to the tribals free of cost .
14. In 1872 only two academies were first opened in

Tripura[2]. In 1947 the figure rose to 284. In 1999-2000 the number of all types of academies rose to 3338[3]. In nooks and corners of Tripura schools have been established.

15. For admission in all academies, the tribals are getting relaxation in age & marks; even for technical & honours courses this facility is extended.

16. A good number of tribal boarding houses have been established.

17. The school-going tribal students get attendance grant, book grant, dress grant and pre-matric stipend and mid-day meal.

18. In colleges a freedom fighter's son gets Rs. 30/- per month, whereas a tribal student gets much more than the above amount.

19. Competitive examinees among them get monthly stipend for a period, and preparatory coaching.

20. For competitive examinations they have reservation facility and relaxation as to age and marks.

21. In civil services post-entry promotion is given to the tribal employees comparatively rapidly.

22. Tripura Tribal Areas Autonomous District Council (T T A A D C) has been established in 1979. About 68.10% of Tripura's total area have been brought within the T T A A D C[4].

23. The democrat and bureaucrat personnel of the TTAADC are largely tribal. They constitute the decision-making authority.

24. Old age pension is given to old and infirm tribals.

25. In the TTAADC area tribals are getting rice through ration shops at an abnormally low and subsidized rate.

26. The tribal weavers get bundles of yarn free of cost.

27. For rearing domestic fowl, goat, swine, cow, duck and pigeon the tribals get financial assistance, loans and subsidies from various agencies like bank, block office, corporation, TTAADC, Tribal Welfare Department, etc.

28. For agriculture and horticulture they get assistance in cash and kind. Seeds, seedlings, implements, manure, training and cash money are offered. Irrigation is arranged.

29. Anti-poverty measures like NREP, SREP, Food for work and Jawahar Rojgar Yojana are implemented to check seasonal unemployment.

30. In the TTAADC area tribal houses are electrified by the P W D almost free of cost.

31. Various voluntary organizations also have been running projects.

Bengali reply

The following answer is generally made by the Bengalees in defence of their influx into Tripura against the opposition spearheaded by some tribals.

1. The Bengalees have been living in the Meghna valley from time immemorial. The copper plate grant of land by Maharaja Vainya Gupta in 188 Gupta era (=507 A.D.) seems to be the earliest historical evidence of the Bengali settlement in the Meghna valley[5].

2. It was the victorious arms of Maharaja Dharma Manikya, Maharaja Dhanya Manikya and Maharaja Vijay Manikya which united the eastern hills with the western plains (=Meghna valley) and built the empire of Tripura and derived benefits from the possession of the fertile valley for centuries.

3. It was the treasure of the flat, fertile field of Bengal, which offered Sher Shah the crown of Hindusthan, as it did to the East India Company later on. It was the same type of field in the far east of Bengal, more specifically the east bank of river Meghna which gave the kings of Hill Tipperah purse, power, position and prestige. It was the loss of the Meghna valley, which lies at the root of population pressure, poverty, pernicious party-politics, & persecution.

4. The immigrant Mongolian tribes had a subsistence economy. Bamboo-flowering, drought, depredations by wild animals, rude method of cultivation and epidemic disease

would render the meager economy vulnerable. The tribes would suffer from famine. How is the food to be procured ? The tribal colony was not primarily a trading settlement. So food would be forcibly collected. Once they had discovered this easy means of enrichment, they carried it making the neighbouring Bengali settlement(of Chittagong, Noakhali, Comilla, Sylhet) victim of war. Such raids were carried on several centuries. Many Bengalees had to flee leaving their devastated villages[6]. Mackenzie's account has left on record their terrible atrocities of a few decades only[7].

5. The immigrant semi-nomadic tribes had no knowledge of blacksmithy, carpentry and goldsmithy. Death of mother at child birth was common, because of their poor knowledge of healthcare and midwifery. So they used to forcibly collect useful artefacts and kidnap young ladies from the Bengali villages. The prime motive for *chabha* (=raid, war, affray) was not annexation of territory, but booty in the shape of hoe, knife, dao, axe, cash, ornaments, lady and boy. Young boys would be carried off as slaves. The Lakhers also indulged in this type of raid[8]. Long before the arrival of the Portuguese pirates & slave traders in Chittagong in 1518 A.D., these tribes had been indulging in the same crimes making the

Bengalees victims by both.

6. Head-hunting was the most terrible tradition. Among the Angami Nagas the killing of a man entitles the killer to a certain distinctive articles of dress, but so does the killing of a leopard or tiger[9]. Writing about the Garo tribe Rawney says "Among the evil customs prevalent amidst them the immolation of human victims (who were always Bengalees) in honour of the dead was at one time very common and they are still staunch slave holders on a large scale[10]". When a Tipperah dies, a fowl is killed and placed with some rice at the dead man's feet[11]. The Kacharis also kill a cock or hen[12]. The Lushai-Kukis also kill a fowl or dog, or pig[13]. This practice of killing an animal or a bird is the remnant of the former practice of head-hunting. In Tripura, then as now, peace hardly prevailed for a long time.

7. The official chronicle of Tripura recorded that thousands of Bengalees had been formerly sacrificed in certain temples of Udaypur, Tripura[14]. Dhanya Manikya remarkably reduced the number. Gait adds that the Chutiyas used to worship Kesai Khati (=the eater of raw flesh) to whom human sacrifices were offered; and Gait comments: "Human sacrifices were also formerly offered by the Tipras, Kacharis, Koches, Jaintias and other Assam tribes[15]".

8. The Bengali soldiers poured out their blood like water in the battle-fields. The Tipperah soldiers, the Jamatia soldiers, the Riang soldiers and the Bengali soldiers, out of corporate spirit, defended Tripura against foreign invasions[16]. The descendants of the Bengali soldiers subsequently came to be known as Laskars who survive even to-day.

During the exile of Govinda Manikya, his queen Gonavati Mahadevi enjoyed the hospitality of the Kunda-Chaudhuri family of Sripur, Bagasair, with honour and dignity[17]. The exiled prince Ramganga, gloomy and despondent, became a homeless wanderer; Ramhari Ghosh-Biswas offered his *zamindari* free of cost; Ramganga was pleased to accept the humble offer.

Thus in times of peace & war, in battles and bureaucratic jobs the Bengali Hindus stood by the side of the Tipperah dynasty. The Bengali soldiers never behaved like mercenary forces. Tripura experienced distresses of treachery of the mercenary Afghans & Portuguese and found that paid alien allies had been more dangerous than sworn enemies[18].

9. Government involves a large amount of expenditure for defence, development and maintenance. Obviously, the Tipperah kings were forced to work out a system of income and

expenditure. Taxes were imposed on various items. The tribal families used to pay house-tax. The Bengali subjects, who were settled cultivators, were in a position convenient to the administration for the assessment and collection of taxes.

10. The kings of Tripura adorned their kingdom with tanks and temples. But antiquity has not preserved the identity of the artists & architects and of the diggers & engravers. Such services can hardly be expected from the semi-nomadic, preliterate communities. Naturally, the kings engaged the Bengali artisans for these purposes. However, in one instance the chronicle of Tripura provides specific evidence: the zamindars of Astagram, Baniachang, Goalpara, Bakla, Bikrampur, Bhawal, Bhulua, Ranabhawal and Sarail had to send Bengali diggers (500+500+700+700+700+1000+1000+1000+1000 respectively) in 1579-80 A.D. for digging a very large tank (=Amar Sagar) planned by Amar Manikya[19].

11. While there is no denying the fact that many castes and communities of India participated in the Indian liberation movement, the pioneering role of the Bengalees is admitted on all hands. The freedom struggle so continuous, so enduring and so far-reaching as in Bengal, Punjab and

Maharashtra was exemplary. But despite all their sacrifices & sufferings most of the Bengalees got, not shield, but a sword; the Bengalees have been dragged out of frying-pan into fire. But the painful and successful freedom struggle has made possible the regular allotment of prodigious amount of money for tribal welfare. A grateful Tripura is expected to remember the sufferings & sacrifices of the freedom fighters.

12. The treacherous dethronement of Lakshman Sen of Bengal by Ikhtyar Uddin Muhammed Bakhtyar Khilji in 1204 A.D. was the prelude to countless numbers of savage attacks on the Hindus of Bengal. The Hindus have been living in constant dread. Many riots were skillfully engineered and ruthlessly executed. Tripura too was harassed. The tribes of Chittagong Hill Tract were not spared. With none to protect them, the defenceless Bengali Hindus and the tribes of CHT opted for the course open to them: to flee to India. They were cruelly thrown out of their ancestral hearths & homes. Their influx into India was not a romantic pleasure trip.

13. Maharajkumar Sahadev Bikram-Kisor has attributed to Maharaja Bir Bikram a noble project worthy of his capacious mind; it was to reestablish

his authority over the Meghna valley and thereby to protect his subjects there. But in the midst of his plans, in the midst of chaos and in the full vigour of his youth, he died on 17th May 1947 A.D., in the thirty-ninth year of his life. He left a minor heir unable to execute the plan and to hold the kingdom together. The administration of the Regent Maharani Kanchanprabha Mahadevi (17.5.1947-14.10.1949 A.D.) utterly failed to tackle three vital problems: to consolidate the Meghna valley, to protect the tribal reserved land and to rehabilitate the Bengali Hindu refugees along the western fringe. The Bengalees ever remain grateful to Maharaja Bir Bikram for his plans, and particularly for his humanitarian services to the Raypura riot victims of March 1941 A.D.

14. The Regent Maharani's administration, and the Chief Commissioner's administration, and Sachindralal Singha's administration in four terms (1953-1957, 1957-1963, 1963-1967 & 1967-1971) fell the brunt of anti-refugee tribal resentment and refugee rehabilitation problem.

Meanwhile some leftists having entered into the hills were desperately establishing rapport in the tribal minds. Their desperate attempts made many Bengali

refugees the worse victims. Some tribals also were suspected and kidnapped[20].

Sachindralal Singha's administration made major attempts at refugee rehabilitation; but here the administration committed major mistakes. The refugee colonies should have been set up along the western and northern border; instead the colonies were set up in the interior tribal areas. Sri Singha's plan might have been to counter the leftist vote banks with the Congress-supporting Bengali refugee colonies. Had the administration been far-sighted enough, it would not have thought of its immediate political gain. The administration used the refugees as dice. The rehabilitation of the refugees in the interior tribal areas has proved to be more political than rational, more negative than natural in intention.

Once the colonies were set up in the interior places, the hard-working and thrifty Bengali artisans and cultivators have added properties by means, fair & fowl. It further enraged the tribals. The Golaghati incidence on 9th October 1948 is a shameful example of the Bengali high-handedness[21].

Observations

Now, considering the grounds of tribal resentment, the answers seem to be pertinent. Both sides have arguments and counter-arguments. Each has certain grievances which

cannot be rebutted by the other. The strength of the arguments of the Bengalees lies in their past sufferings and contributions to the freedom struggle. The strength of the arguments of the tribals lies in their present distress because of heavy influx of the Bengalees. In the thick of arguments and counter-arguments, the other parties really responsible for the sufferings of both the communities, are escaping the notice. All the past sufferings and sacrifices of the Bengalees, if placed on one side of a scale of a balance along with all the protective privileges of the constitution of India, do not appear to the tribals to be equal to the consequences of the Bengali influx in Tripura. Even if in former days the Bengalees were, the extremists argue, helpful to Tripura, now they are harmful, and so they deserve punishments. In their inflamed temper, the tribal extremists are unanimous in condemning, repudiating and punishing the Bengali Hindus.

The Bengali colonies were not ignorant either of the tribal resentment and hostile preparations or of the dangers which awaited them from tribal insurgency. But very few families moved westwards beforehand. Instead, many of them rallied round Amara Bangali, an Ananda Marg-based Bengali communal organization. The Bengalees too sporadically attempted to resist the tribal attacks particularly in June 1980 A.D. and killed a few tribals at Amarpur and plundered tribal movable properties at Jirania only to leave the tribals furious, revengeful and stronger

than they were before. The process of 'liberation' of the TTAADC area has been complete within 2004 A.D. through the avowed strategy of ethnic cleansing and weeding out. One can easily imagine the most desolate conditions prevailing in the Bengali colonies. With heavy hearts and tearful eyes, as if going into the uncertain and wild exile, the Bengali Hindus twice quitted their hearths and homes, villa and village, tanks and temples, fields and farms. The terrible union of fundamentalist fanaticism, ethnic extremism and competitive populism made them fugitive refugees. For the distress, self-examination rather than blaming others, may be the rational approach. The Bengali Hindus may do well to realize that the ancestors' credit cannot provide perennial protection against mistakes. It had been an act of imprudence to pay little attention to the grievances of the Seng krak. It had been equally an impetuous act to set up colonies in the interior. The passive Bengali refugees too, with incredible carelessness, paid little attention to the rising threats, a neglect which later resulted in forcible expulsion from the interior colonies, where even the government had, in reality, little control. So for the present hatred & hostility, the tribals alone cannot be held responsible. Who can save an unthinking mass !

It appears that the tribal extremists have been thinking in terms of their own present interests and past honour. They are multiplying their demands and thereby enlarging

the grounds of quarrel. The tribals have become stronger than before, and have got many associations and leaders and helpers to whet their demands. Their demands are no longer confined to the formation of the TTAADC which has already been constituted. Some provocative neighbours with black claw hidden beneath the kid glove and age old longing for the overthrow of the Indian political system, are adroitly utilizing every opportunity to drive wedges into the kerf. Hence one finds the ceaseless exertions of the misdirected valour of the tribal extremists. The future of the region is already exposed to so much uncertainty that it is difficult to foresee the end. Long after the subsidence of this fury, long after the end of these problematic days, the future generations of the tribals may realize that the extremists were indiscriminate seekers of help from unworthy sources. The vivid memory of accumulated anguish prevents calm detachment and rational judgement.

For the immigrant refugees from the Meghna Valley, the sky became sunny for a short period. Only a few persons guessed that the storm would recur.

The clash was not between the rich and the poor; but it was ethnic in character. The faultline has been removed by a multiple approach; but mainly by the emancipation of the Tripuri peoples, and the deportation of the Bengali peoples from the TTAADC zone.

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APPENDIX

APPENDIX

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Chapter XIII

Ethnicity & identity of Tripura tribes

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পরিশিষ্ট

সংখ্যাপঞ্জি - ১

বছর	মোট জনসংখ্যা	দশকে বৃদ্ধি	উপজাতীয় জনসংখ্যা	শতকরা উপজাতি
১৮৭৪-৭৫	৭৪৫২৩		৪৭৫২৩	৬৪
১৮৮১	৯৫৬৩৭	২৮.৩৩	৪৯৯১৫	৫৫
১৮৯১	১৩৭৫৭৫	৪৩.৮৫	৭০২৯২	৫১.০৯
১৯০১	১৭৩৩২৫	২৫.৯৮	৯১৬৭৯	৫২.৮৯
১৯১১	২২৯৬১৩	৩২.৪৮	১১১৩০৩	৪৮.৪৭
১৯২১	৩০৪৪৩৭	৩২.৫৯	১৭১৬১০	৫৬.৩৭
১৯৩১	৩৮২৪৫০	২৫.৬৩	২০৩৩২৭	৫৩.১৬
১৯৪১	৫১৩০১০	৩৪.১৪	২৫৬৯৯১	৫০.০৯
১৯৫১	৬৪৫৭০৭	২৫.৫৬	২৩৭৯৫৮	৩৭.২৩
১৯৬১	১১৪২০০৫	৭৮.৭১	৩৬০০৭০	৩১.০৫
১৯৭১	১৫৫৬৩৪২	৩৬.২৮	৪৫০৫৪৪	২৮.৯৫
১৯৮১	২০৪৭৩৫১	৩১.৫	৫৮৩৯২০	২৮.৫২
১৯৯১	২৭৫৭২০৫	৩৪.৩০	৮৫৩৩৪৫	৩০.৯৫
২০০১	৩১৯১১৬৮	১৫.৭৪	১০৬৯৬২২	৩৩.৫২
২০১১	৩৬৭১০৩২	১৪.৭৫	১১,০৪,১২৯	-

সংখ্যাপঞ্জি - ২

বছর	ঘনত্ব	শিক্ষার হার
১৮৭১	৯	
১৮৮১	১০	
১৮৯১	১৩	
১৯০১	১৭	২.২৮
১৯১১	২১	৪.০৩
১৯২১	২৯	৭.০৮
১৯৩১	৩৬	২.৮৪
১৯৪১	৪৯	
১৯৫১	৬২	১৫.৫২
১৯৬১	১০৯	২০.২৪
১৯৭১	১৪৯	৩০.৯৮
১৯৮১	১৯৫	৪১.৭৮
১৯৯১	২৬৩	৬০.৪৪
২০০১	৩০৪	৭৩.২০
২০১১	৩৫০	৮৭.৭৫

সংখ্যাপঞ্জি - ৩

সন	ধর্ম					
	হিন্দু	ইসলাম	ঈশাই	বৌদ্ধ	শিখ	জৈন
১৯৪১	৩৪৭৭৯২	১,২৩,৫৭০	৩২৮	৭,৭২৪		
১৯৫১	৪,৮০,৬৬২	১,৩৬,৯৪০	৫,২৬২	১৫,৪০৩	২১	
১৯৬১	৮৬,৭৯৯৮	২,৩০,০০২	১০,০৩৯	৩৩,৭১৬	৪৯	১৯৫
১৯৭১	১৩,৯৩,৬৮৯	১,০৩,৯৬২	১৫,৭১৩	৪২,২৮৫	৩১৮	৩৭৫
১৯৮১	১৮,৩৪,২১৮	১,৩৮,৫২৯	২৪,৮৭২	৫৪,৮০৬	২৮৫	২৯৭
১৯৯১	২৩,৮৪,৯৯৪	১,৯৬,৪৯৫	৪৬,৪৭২	১,২৮,২৬০	৭৪০	৩০১
২০০১	২৭,৩৯,৩১০	২,৫৪,৪৪২	১,০২,৪৮৯	৯৮,৯৯২	১,১৮২	৪৭৭
২০১১	৩০,৬৩,৯০৩	৩,১৬,০৪২	১,৫৯,৮৮২	১,২৫,৩৮৫	১,০৭০	৮৬০

সংখ্যাপঞ্জি - ৪ (ক)

ক্রমিক সংখ্যা	উপজাতি	১৯৫১	১৯৬১	১৯৭১	১৯৮১
১	তিপ্রা	১৫০৯৭১	১৮৯৭৯৯	২৫০৩৮২	৩৩১১৯১
২	রিয়াং	৪৮৪৭১	৫৬৫৯৭	৬৪৭২২	৮৩৪৭৬
৩	জমাতিয়া	২৭৬৪	২৪৩৫৯	৩৪১৯২	৪৪৫৫৪
৪	চাকমা	৭২৭৭	২২৩৮৬	২৮৬২২	৩৫০৭৯
৫	হালাম	১৬৪৪	১৬২৯৮	১৯০৭৬	২৯০৪০
৬	নোয়াতিয়া	১৯১৬	১৬০১০	১০২৯৭	৭০৭৩
৭	মগ	৩৭৮৯	১০৫২৪	১৩২৭৩	১৮২৯১
৮	কুকি	২৭২১	৫৫৩২	৭৭৭৫	৫৪৩২
৯	গারো	৭৩৬২	৫৪৮৪	৫৫৫৯	৭৩১১
১০	মুণ্ডা	৫১	৪৪০৯	৫৩৪৭	৭৯১৭
১১	লুসাই	১৯৪৭	২৯৮৮	৩৬৭২	৩৭৭৮
১২	ওরাঁও	—	২৮৭৫	৩৪২৮	৫৩০৬
১৩	সাঁওতাল	৭৩৬	১৫৬২	২২২২	২৭০৯
১৪	উচই	—	৭৬৬	১০৬১	১২৯৫
১৫	খাসিয়া	১৫১	৩৪৯	৪৯১	৪৫৮
১৬	ভিল	৪১	৬৯	১৬৯	৭৯১
১৭	লেপচা	৫	৭	১৭৭	১০৩
১৮	ভূটিয়া	১৯	৭	৩	১৯
১৯	ছইমল	—	৫০	—	১১

বিশেষ দ্রষ্টব্য ঃ সমগ্র ত্রিপুরাবাসীর মধ্যে নগরবাসীর হার
১৯০১ থেকে ২০১১ অবধি এরূপ ঃ
৩.৭০, ২.৯৮, ২.৫৪, ২.৫০,৩.৪৫,৬.৬৭,৬.০২,
১০.৪৩,১০.৯৯,১৫.৩০, ১৭.০২,১৮.২৬

সংখ্যাপঞ্জি - ৪ (খ)

ক্রমাঙ্ক	উপজাতি	১৯৯১	২০০১	২০১১
১	তিপ্রা	৪,৬১,৫৩১	৫,৪৩,৮৪৮	৫,৯২,২৫৫
২	রিয়াং	১,১১,৬০৬	১,৬৫,১০৩	১,৮৮,২২০
৩	জমাতিয়া	৬০,৮২৪	৭৪,৯৪৯	৮৩,৩৪৭
৪	চাকমা	৯৬,০৯৬	৬৪,২৯৩	৭৯,৮১৩
৫	হালাম	৩৬,৪৯৯	৪৭,২৪৫	৫৭,২১০
৬	নোয়াতিয়া	৪,১৫৮	৬,৬৫৫	২৪,২৯৮
৭	মগ	৩১,৬১২	৩০,৩৮৫	৩৭,৮৯৩
৮	কুকি	৯,৩৬০	১১,১৮০	১২,৯৫২
১০	মুন্ডা	১১,৫৪৭	১২,৪১৬	১৪,৫৪৪
১১	লুসাই	৪,৯১০	৪,৭৭৭	৫,৩৮৪
১২	ওরাঁও	৬,৭৫১	৬,২২৩	১২,০১১
১৩	সাঁওতাল	২,৭৩৬	২,১৫১	২,৯১৩
১৪	উচই	১,৬৩৭	২,১০৩	২,৪৪৭
১৫	খাসিয়া	৩৮৫	৬৩০	৩৬৬
১৬	ভিল	১,৭৫৪	২,৩৩৬	৩,১০৫
১৭	লেপচা	১১১	১০৫	১৫৭
১৮	ভুটিয়া	৪৭	২৯	২৮
১৯	ছইমল	২৬	২২৬	৫৪৯

ডাইনি সন্দেহে নানা সমাজে নিগৃহীতদের কতিপয় নামের তালিকা

আঃদিনাংক	ঠিকানা	নাম
২৩.১০.২০০১	রাজুদাস পাড়া, রানীরবাজার	বুধলক্ষ্মী, মঙ্গলক্ষ্মী দেববর্মা
৩০.৪.২০০৩	বসিরাম কবরাপাড়া, জিরানীয়া	মঙ্গলক্ষ্মী দেববর্মা
৬.৫.২০০৩	উজান ফটিকছড়া, লেফুংগা	সুমতী, মঙ্গলক্ষ্মী, পঞ্চলক্ষ্মী দেববর্মা
২৯.১.২০০৪	কাঁটালিয়া, সোনামুড়া	পঞ্চকন্যা ত্রিপুরা
২০.৫.২০০৪	কৃষ্ণকবরাপাড়া, জিরানীয়া	গোলাপী, ফুলকসারী দেববর্মা
১৮.৮.২০০৪	কলাছড়া, সাব্রুম	বাদ্যলক্ষ্মী, রতিমোহন ত্রিপুরা
২৫.১০.২০০৫	মনপাথর, শান্তির বাজার	সরলক্ষ্মী জমাতিয়া
২.১.২০০৬	শান্তিরায় পাড়া, চাম্পাহাওর	সীতালক্ষ্মী, সন্ধ্যায়, সুজিৎ, সম্পারী দেববর্মা
৫.৮.২০০৬	জমাদার বাড়ী, চাম্পাহাওর, খোয়াই	ইন্দুবালা দেববর্মা
১৬.৯.২০০৬	তুকুই বাড়ী, তেলিয়ামুড়া	লক্ষ্মী সিং, কৃষ্ণথাং, হেকতি, জুলেশ্বরী রাংখল
৩.৫.২০০৭	মনাই ছড়া, খোয়াই	বালাংতী দেববর্মা
৪.৪.২০১১	সুবল সিং, সিধাই	গীতা দেববর্মা
৮.১২.২০১১	মনাইপাথর, সোনামুড়া	নন্দবাসী, পারুল নোয়াতিয়া
১১.২.২০১২	মনু বনকুল, সাব্রুম	ধনশ্রী ত্রিপুরা
১২.৫.২০১২	বাহাত্তর বাড়ী, কিল্লা	যুধাপতি কলই
১৮.১০.২০১২	জিরানীয়া	বিশ্বলক্ষ্মী দেববর্মা
৬.৩.২০১৩	শাকবাড়ী, মনু বাজার	অজংগমালা, পুষ্পমালা ত্রিপুরা
২৯.৪.২০১৩	পতিছড়ি, শান্তিরবাজার	সবিতা মারাক
১৯.৫.২০১৩	দীনবন্ধু নগর, মান্দাই	বীণা দেববর্মা
১৭.৭.২০১৩	তৈলেনবাড়ী, কৈলাসহর	লালনুনফেলি ডার্লং
৩.৪.২০১৪	উদয়সেনাপতি পাড়া, লেফুংগা	সত্যলক্ষ্মী দেববর্মা
২৪.৪.২০১৪	দ্রোণাচার্য্য পাড়া, ঋষ্যমুখ	তপশ্রী ত্রিপুরা
১০.৫.২০১৪	সাতচান্দ, মনু বাজার	মাধবশ্রী ত্রিপুরা
১৭.৩.২০১৫	বিশ্বকুমার পাড়া, কমলপুর	কন্যাপতি দেববর্মা
২২.৫.২০১৫	মধুবন, প্রীতিলতা, রানীর খামার	অঞ্জনা মারাক

ত্রিপুরার রাজাদের বংশ তালিকা

কিরাত দেশে ত্রিপুরা রাজবংশ হল অগ্রগামী ও শীর্ষ স্থানীয় রাজকুল। এ-বংশের রাজাদের নাম বহু, তালিকা দীর্ঘ, ইতিহাস সুবিদিত। এ-কাজে সব কয়টি নাম প্রদান প্রাসঙ্গিক হবে না; তাই অপেক্ষাকৃত আধুনিক কালের নরপতিদের নাম সংযোজিত হল তিনটি পর্যায়ে-

বরাক উপত্যকায় থাকা কালীন

শাসন-কাল	নৃপতির নাম
আঃ ৬৩৫-৬৭৫খৃ	ডুঙ্গুর ফা (আদি ধর্মফা)
আঃ ৬৭৫-৭১০	খাড়ুং ফা
আঃ ৭১০-৭৪৫	ছেংফালাই
আঃ ৭৪৫-৭৮০	ললিত রায়
আঃ ৭৮০-৮১৫	মুকুন্দ ফা
আঃ ৮১৫-৮৫০	কমল রায়
আঃ ৮৫০-৮৮৫	কৃষ্ণ দাস
আঃ ৮৮৫-৯২০	যশফা
আঃ ৯২০-৯৫৫	মুচুঙ্গ ফা
আঃ ৯৫৫-৯৮০	সাধু রায়
আঃ ৯৮০-১০১০	প্রতাপ রায়
আঃ ১০১০-১০৪৫	বিষ্ণু প্রসাদ
আঃ ১০৪৫-১০৭৫	বানেশ্বর
আঃ ১০৭৫-১১০০	বীরবাহু
আঃ ১১০০-১১২৫	সম্রাট
আঃ ১১২৫-১১৪০	চম্পা
আঃ ১১৪০-১১৬০	মেঘরাজ
আঃ ১১৬০-১২২৫	ধর্ম ধর
আঃ ১২২৫-১২৫০	ছেংথুমফা
আঃ ১২৫০-১২৭০	আচংফা

গোমতী উপত্যকায় থাকাকালীন

আঃ ১২৭০-১২৮০	মহারাজ খিচংফা
আঃ ১২৮০-১৩০০	মহারাজ ডাঙ্গর ফা
আঃ ১৩০০-১৩২৫	মহারাজ রাজা ফা
আঃ ১৩১৫-১৩৫০	মহারাজ রত্ন মাণিক্য
আঃ ১৩৫০-১৩৭৫	মহারাজ প্রতাপ মাণিক্য
আঃ ১৩৭৫-১৪০০	মহারাজ মুকুট মাণিক্য
আঃ ১৪০০-১৪৩০	মহারাজ মহা মাণিক্য
আঃ ১৪৩১-১৪৬১	মহারাজ ধর্ম মাণিক্য
আঃ ১৪৬২-১৪৯০	মহারাজ প্রতাপ মাণিক্য
আঃ ১৪৯০-১৫১৫	**মহারাজ ধন্য মাণিক্য**
	মহারাজ ধ্বজ মাণিক্য
	মহারাজ দেব মাণিক্য
আঃ ১৫২৭-১৫২৮	মহারাজ ইন্দ্র মাণিক্য
আঃ ১৫২৮-১৫৬৩	**মহারাজ বিজয় মাণিক্য**
	মহারাজ অনন্ত মাণিক্য
	মহারাজ উদয় মাণিক্য
	মহারাজ জয় মাণিক্য
আঃ ১৫৭৭-১৫৮৬	মহারাজ অমর মাণিক্য
	মহারাজ যশোধর মাণিক্য
আঃ ১৬২৪-১৬৬০	মহারাজকল্যাণ মাণিক্য
আঃ ১৬৬০-১৬৬১	মহারাজ গোবিন্দ মাণিক্য
আঃ ১৬৬২-১৬৬৬	মহারাজ ছত্র মাণিক্য
আঃ ১৬৬৭-১৬৭২	মহারাজ গোবিন্দ মাণিক্য
আঃ ১৬৭৩-১৬৮৩	মহারাজ রাম মাণিক্য
আঃ ১৬৮৪	মহারাজ রত্ন মাণিক্য
আঃ ১৬৮৪-১৬৮৪	মহারাজ নরেন্দ্র মাণিক্য

আঃ ১৬৮৫-১৭১২	মহারাজ রত্ন মাণিক্য
আঃ ১৭১২-১৭১৩	মহারাজ মহেন্দ্র মাণিক্য
আঃ ১৭১৩-১৭২৫	মহারাজ ধর্ম মাণিক্য
আঃ ১৭২৬-১৭২৯	মহারাজ জগৎ মাণিক্য
আঃ ১৭২৯	মহারাজ ধর্ম মাণিক্য
আঃ ১৭২৯-১৭৩৮	মহারাজ মুকুন্দ মাণিক্য
আঃ ১৭৩৯-১৭৪৪	মহারাজ জয় মাণিক্য
আঃ ১৭৪৪-১৭৪৫	মহারাজ ইন্দ্র মাণিক্য
আঃ ১৭৪৬	মহারাজ জয় মাণিক্য
আঃ ১৭৪৬-১৭৪৭	মহারাজ বিজয় মাণিক্য

হাওড়া উপত্যকায় থাকাকালীন

১৭৪৭-১৭৮৩	**মহারাজ কৃষ্ণ মাণিক্য**
১৭৮৩-১৭৮৫	মহারানী জাহ্নবী দেবী
১৭৮৫-১৮০৪	মহারাজ রাজধর মাণিক্য
১৮০৪-১৮০৯	মহারাজ রামগঙ্গা মাণিক্য
১৮০৯-১৮১৩	মহারাজ দূর্গা মাণিক্য
১৮১৩-১৮২৬	মহারাজ রামগঙ্গা মাণিক্য
১৮২৬-১৮২৯	মহারাজ কাশীচন্দ্র মাণিক্য
১৮৩০-১৮৪৯	মহারাজ কৃষ্ণ কিশোর মাণিক্য
১৮৪৯-১৮৬২	মহারাজ ঈশান চন্দ্র মাণিক্য
১৮৬২-১৮৯৬	মহারাজ বীরচন্দ্র মাণিক্য
১৮৯৬-১৯০৯	**মহারাজ রাধাকিশোর মাণিক্য**
১৯০৯-১৯২৩	মহারাজ বীরেন্দ্র কিশোর মাণিক্য
১৯২৩-১৯৪৭	মহারাজ বীর বিক্রম কিশোর মাণিক্য
১৯৪৭-১৯৪৯	মহারাজ কিরীট বিক্রম কিশোর মাণিক্য

আধুনিক ভারতে প্রণীত কতিপয় সামাজিক আইনের তালিকা

Year	Law
1829	Suttee Immolation Prevention Act
1843	Indian Slavery Act
1850	Caste Disabilities Removal Act
1856	Hindu Widow Remarriage Act
1860	The Indian Penal Code
1864	The Marriage Act
1865	The Indian Succession Act
1870	Female Infanticide Prevention Act
1872	The Indian Evidence Act
1872	The Special Marriage Act
1882	The Transfer of Property Act
1923	The Special Marriage (amendment) Act
1923	The Married Women's Property Act
1928	The Hindu Inheritance (Removal of Disability) Act
1929	Child Marriage Restraint Act
1933	Children (pledging of labour) Act
1937	The Hindu Women's Right to property Act
1956	The Hindu Marriage Act
1956	The Hindu Succession Act
1956	The Hindu Minority and Guardianship Act
1956	The Hindu Adoption and Maintenance Act
1973	The Code of Criminal procedure.

এসব সর্বভারতীয় আইনের সাথে সাদৃশ্য রেখে, ত্রিপুরার রাজারা রাজকীয় আদেশ জারী করেছিলেন:যেমন ১৭.৩.১২৮৮ ত্রিং (জুলাই ১৮৭৮) এক আদেশ বলে মহারাজ বীর চন্দ্র মাণিক্য জুলাই প্রথা বন্ধ করে দেন এবং ৮.২.১২৯৯ ত্রিং (মে ১৮৮৯) সতীদাহ প্রথা রহিত করেন। স্থানীয় প্রথাগত বিধানকে সর্ব ভারতীয় আইন-আদেশের অনুগামী করার প্রয়াস চালিয়েছিলেন ত্রিপুরার রাজারা। উচই সমাজও তাই করছে।

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